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Know Your Stress Manage Your Stress

Dr. Rupashree Khubalkar

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Stressor
Symptoms
Meditation
Remedies
Causes
Asana
Peace
PAS
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Know Your Stress Manage Your Stress

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Dr. Rupashree Khubalkar

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Preface

The most reasonable and viable thing about writing this book was to develop understanding of the dynamics of our stress as a human being and provide common men and women like us some guidelines that would really give turn to our lives for the better.

This book is, truly speaking, a transcription of number of lectures / speeches delivered and short workshops or discussion sessions conducted for various groups of employees, and owners or directors or deputy directors of banks, college teachers, workers, and self employed, or retired employees of multiple institutions.

There is a lot written about stress and stress management and yet there is a feeling left to know more about it. This hints at something that is still unexplored.

This book approaches the concept of stress and stress management to integrate technical indulgence with layman's curiosity to comprehend them. This book not only grants psycho-physiological bases of individual's stress depicting liaison between stress and disease; it also provides spiritual standpoint and offers psycho-spiritual ways of intervention with their underpinnings. The book delightfully takes note of spirituality facet and ventures a dip into spiritually oriented methods.

Honestly enough, you may not find all regarding stress in this book but the writer does promise if you read this and grasp the essence, you will gain an insight into know how and what about your stress, the origin of your stress and how to go about managing your stress. It would help you discover the attitude and or technique(s) or method(s) most proper for you to proceed on the way of psychophysical homeostasis and tranquil heterostasis of self perfection. It may lend a hand to expand vision how to direct oneself to move forward in self-exploration and self-enhancement without getting influenced by ill effects of being tensed or stressed. This book will allow you to discover your stress area or areas and discern ways how to cope with them. It may help you find right technique and attitude or and motivate you to practice them to gain maximum benefit in self - treatment of self tension.

You may comprehend general ideology underlying your stress response and behaviour and also the key to mend it.

– R. Khubalkar

Thanks

I want to register my genuine thanks to all that audience of employees of various cadre and directors and deputy directors of different branches of Co-operative Banks who listened carefully, participated intently in sessions on stress management and provided feedback immediately or after a period of days, months, or years.

The talks and participatory sessions together ultimately resulted into a final text of the present manuscript.

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It would be unbecoming on my part if I fail to express my sincere gratitude towards Mrs. Anjali Pathak; Mr. V.G. Mandavkar; Mr. Dilip Mane, Mr. S.V. More, Cooperative Education Officers of Nagpur District Cooperative Board Ltd., Nagpur; Dr. Makarand Khubalkar, my brother - a Senior Surgeon and Associate Professor at Department of Surgery, Government Medical College and Hospital, Nagpur, Dr. C.G. Pande, retired Professor and Head, Dept. of Psychology, Nagpur University, Nagpur, who all facilitated this work by opportune assistance and criticism.

I am especially thankful to Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust for giving permission to use extracts from writings of Sri Aurobindo.

Last but not the least I owe my thanks to the publisher for pursued timely printing of this text.

– R. Khubalkar

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Manage Your Stress

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1 CHAPTER

Introduction

- *Stress and We*
  You and Stress
  - *What do you generally do when you are stressed?*
  - *Stress Cycle*
- *Why Manage Stress?*
- *What are the Common Causes of stress?*
  - *Most Common Problem-Stress Areas*
  - *Other Crucial Factors*

1.1 Stress and We You and Stress

Every era leaves an impact of certain popular but contemporaneously significant concepts. Two such popular terms which have recently attracted attention of most people in today's technologically advanced world are, 'stress' and 'stress management'. Just as in competitive and speedy world stress is inevitable, so is the demand of its management. Consciously, we are more concerned with stress than being aware of its management. Stressors are vividly identified whereas stress management is conceived haphazardly, and, perhaps therefore, practiced infrequently.

Truly speaking, we use these terms - 'stress', 'tension', 'stress management' quite frequently but usually very casually, and many times 'fashionably! They are familiar words. Perhaps, their over - familiarity deters us from taking note of them seriously. However, one thing is certain they capture the attention of all, right from a small child to an elderly person. Even small kids are often seen speaking of stress. 'I am getting bored', 'Don't give me stress', 'Eh, don't create tension yaar ('yaar' – a Hindi word for 'friend')' – are customary phrases in their daily conversation. Whether, they use these terms with full or partial understanding or without understanding, is known to them only. No doubt, we all talk about them habitually.

While we speak of stress or stress management, we intuitively recognize that stress is some important thing in our life that needs to be managed, controlled. It is said, 'if you want to control anything in life, then, control your stress.' To control a thing, we must know the thing well. It is imperative for management of stress; we must know what we mean by 'stress'. We must know its nature; we must know its significance in our life, its relationship with the individual as a person and its expanse in life.

Earlier era was known as 'Golden Era' – 'Golden Age'! This era is known as the IT Era - Information Technology era or IT Age - Information Technology Age! This era is also called 'Stress Era' or 'Stress Age'! But, this does not denote that in those earlier days, people had no stress or tension; perchance, they were not aware of it, of its impact. Today, people from all walks of life are attracted toward stress, because, recent research especially during the past three to four decades has shown definite association of stress with chronic health problems.

If you look into the common causes of death these days, you will find the names of illnesses, such as - 'heart attack', 'diabetes', 'arthritis' and the like. These illnesses are chronic. Even after heart attack, an individual can live for a decade or two, or even more. A typical characteristic of these illnesses is - there is no external infection but there occurs some systematic change in the whole body or body systems. In earlier days - four or five decades back, the most common causes of death were some kind of infection – bacteria, germs etc.; people died of plague, cholera, malaria etc. The death occurred in a few days or a few months. With the advent of antibiotics, infectious diseases could be brought under control. However, along with Industrial Revolution new type of chronic illnesses cropped up. The whole scenario intrigued professionals and intellectuals. What could affect the whole system chronically? This was the million – rupee question! Researches, world over, answered it in favour of "stress".

The common man today faces stress every now and then, in every walk of life. Stress accompanies you wherever you are, wherever you go. Like a shadow it follows you. Stress is so close to each of us that its presence is barely perceived. It has become an inbuilt ingredient of today's life. Many call it 'a silent killer'.

Imagine you are in some such situations as the following:

Situation 1

You go to office with high mind-set because you have completed a vital budget report in time. You are sure;

you have prepared the best report. You take the file to your superior with an expectation of a pat on your back. Your superior blasts: 'Mr. Deshpande, what is this? What has happened to you? Can our company afford this expenditure? You are working in this firm for the past fifteen years. How could you submit such an irresponsible report without conducting complete survey? - Do it again', - a difficult boss — result → Stress.

Situation 2

You humbly wish to admit your beloved tiny toddler in a good nursery school. Before this thought is stabilized in your mind your stress begins. Which school will be the best? Will my child get a 'seat'/ admission in this school? What will be the school fee? What will be the donation? How will I arrange it? When your child is finally admitted, still, your tension is not over. For, you think, school is too far for the child of 'his (her) age', how will my child go to school? Will the autorikshawala (three wheeled scooter driver) take the child safely to the school; and bring him (her) back safely? How will the child adjust in the school atmosphere? So many questions - eventually stress.

There are a significant number of parents, in whom stress regarding children begins before their child is born. These parents secure 'their (not yet born) child's admission in a particular school in advance. Sometimes, parents have to 'face interview' for the child's admission in a pre-nursery class. Parents are assessed for their intellectual and monetary capabilities by the school authorities to find out whether they (parents) will be able to afford that particular school, — endless worries of children - result → stress.

Situation 3

There is an inspection in your office; you were warned to be present in the office at least half an hour early than the usual scheduled time. You are about to start your scooter, just to find a flat tire in rear wheel. Your scooter has refused to move ahead and you are stuck; its raining you are not getting a taxi — result → stress.

Situation 4

You purchased a brand new car a week before. The dealer had promised you specific accessories at the time of finalization of the deal. Now he does not pay attention to you, to your rightful demands. You feel insulted — result → stress.

Situation 5

You want your young college going son to be back at home by nine in the evening. Every day, one episode of exchange of bitter words with him! Your son stops interacting with you; the moment you enter the house he vanishes in his room, doesn't share meals with you on the dining table, doesn't talk to you, and conveys his demands through mother or someone else — result → stress.

- *You open a news paper in the morning with a steaming cup of tea to freshen up your mind but you are bombarded with such news as murder, looting, burning, rape, violence, unrest, unruly morcha (procession) etc.- all news of suppression and oppression. Instead of getting a 'new air' to begin your day, you feel dejected, restless, unhappy, apprehensive!*

These and so many other things create stress in you. From morning to evening, stress accompanies you continuously and constantly throughout the day. To some, it even follows in sleep and they get up frightened following nightmare or end up in restless sleep or disturbed sleep. Major and minor stresses or hassles are part of human life. They are not immediate life - threatening circumstances but every now and then they pervasively disturb you. They shape your daily living. When do these outwardly superficial irritations sow their roots deep in you and become chronic, you do not even realize.

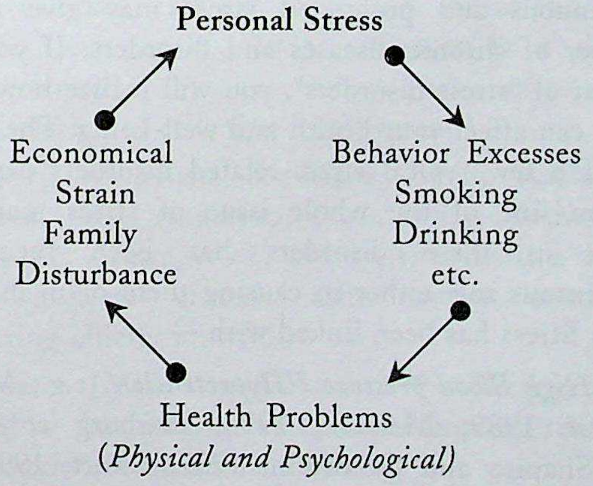
1.1.1 What do you generally do when you are stressed?

In the face of a stress situation, you are naturally inclined to ease out your stress. You may, under stress, light a cigarette, or go for a cup of tea or coffee or a drink; Or you may prefer to go to canteen and just eat something though you have had stomach full an hour before at

home; Or you become simply too restless - it is impossible for you to concentrate on anything. A few of you may settle for a glass of wine / alcohol. It becomes difficult for you to work smoothly, to communicate with others sensibly. You may shout unnecessarily at others or you may simply refuse to talk to anybody. Irony of all these 'stress - relieving measures' is, instead of decreasing your stress; these reactions may increase your stress. They may lead to further miseries. Fundamentally, these *behavioural excesses* are adopted to compensate for discomfort and not caused by genuine need. You are eating not because you are hungry! Thus, 'unnecessary' drinking, smoking, or eating set you on the corridor of ill health.

Look at the whole situation. You are smoking (or drinking or eating) when your body is not in need of it; you are not talking when it is needed and you are shouting when it is not warranted. You are not 'you'. You are eating when your body does not need food; that means you are consuming 'extra'; that means you are striding toward obesity and / or undesirable digestive troubles – malnutrition indigestion etc.. You are compromising on your health - physical as well as mental. Your unwanted smoking is inviting serious health problems; you are unnecessarily shouting or crying, which means you are waning essential communication creating problems in interpersonal relationship. If your job demands pleasant manners then you are loosing a client, meaning you are attracting financial troubles and adjustment problems. This in turn may lead you to further increase in stress. Thus, a vicious circle is formed and you are caught in a 'stress cycle' - one stress leading to another. Stress begets stress.

1.1.2 Stress Cycle


Personal Stress
Behavior Excesses
Smoking
Drinking
etc.
Health Problems
(*Physical and Psychological*)
Economical
Strain
Family
Disturbance

1.2 Why Manage Stress?

Augmented accumulative stress puts your psychological and physical health at stake. Stress has direct or indirect relation with health; health is associated with capacity to work; work is associated with production. Perceived chronic stress may negatively influence immune system. Your resistance power is affected which increases vulnerability to a variety of diseases or disorders. When health is affected, your capability to work efficiently is hampered; your capacity to enjoy and 'feel the life' is narrowed down; eventually, your physical and mental output is diluted.

Life productivity is lessened. Your total health is compromised, and hence, you need to manage and control your stress so that you can work efficiently and live fruitfully. The current texture of society compels us to become aware of stress and stress management.

Growing recent research evidence shows cognizable link between stress and chronic medical disorders. Continuous and prolonged stress may give rise to a number of chronic diseases and disorders. If you look at the list of "stress disorders", you will realize how seriously stress can affect your health and well-being. The following list of a few typical stress-related disorders explains the bottom line of the whole issue of stress management. Stress in these disorders has been seen playing momentous role either in causing them or in maintaining them. Stress has been linked with —

- *High Blood pressure / Hypertension* (e.g., Menkes, *et al*, 1989; Manuck, 1994; Harburg *et al.*, 1973; Shapiro and Goldstein, 1982; Ewart, 1991) (Stress increases blood pressure, prolonged stress may maintain higher levels of blood pressure leading to a diagnosis of 'hypertension' - a well-known disorder.),
- *Cardiovascular diseases / CHD* – Coronary Heart Diseases (e.g., Garrity and Marks, 1979; Cottington

and House, 1987) (Stress has been found to have a link with decreased cardiovascular fitness.),

- *Atherosclerosis* (e.g., Everson, *et al.*, 1997; Matthews *et al.*, 1998) (Atherosclerosis is a condition in which thickening of vessels is caused. Stress may cause increase in cholesterol that may promote thickening of walls of arteries.),
- *Diabetes* (Hanson *et al.*,1987) (Diabetes is a condition in which blood sugar metabolism is mainly affected and that leads to increased blood sugar levels.),
- *Ulcer - Peptic ulcer* (Levenstein *et al.*, 1999; Lipton, *et al.*, 1994) (Peptic ulcer is a condition in which the internal lining of the intestine is affected and increased acid levels may cause ulcers.),
- *Cancer* (Kiekolt – Glaser and Glaser, 1995; Compas and Luecken, 2002); Sklar and Anisman, 1981; 1985; Levy, *et al.*, 1985). (Cancer is a disease characterized by excessive or uncontrolled proliferation of cells that forms tumor.)
- *Arthritis* (Soloman & Moos, 1965; Kaplan & Sadock, 1981; Anderson, *et al.*, 1985; Thomason *et al.*, 1992; Zautra, *et al.*, 1989) (Arthritis is a disease that indicate chronic inflammatory conditions affecting chiefly joints),
- *Asthma* – (Miller and Wood, 1994; Wright *et al.*, 1998) – (an intermittent, variable, and reversible obstruction of bronchial airways),
- *Allergies* / Dermatitis / Skin Diseases – (Teshima, *et al.*, 1982).

Stress is also connected with common cold (Cohen *et al.*, 1999; 1991; 1998) (It is observed that due to stress, ability to keep away the virus causing common cold is decreased), Persistence of wound or recovery from surgical wounds (Kiekolt – Glaser, *et al.*, 1998) (Stress adversely affects the ability of the body to heal the wound), Anxiety and depression / depressive mood (Salovey *et al.*, 2000; McEwen, 1998; Sapolosky, 1998), Headaches – Migraine headache (Sternbach, 1966; Veninga, & Spradley, 1981; AMA, 1989; Andrasik *et al.*, 1986; Lipton, *et al.*, 1994), Lowered resistance to illness / probability of every kind of illness (Salovey *et al.*, 2000; HMS – Harvard Medical School, 2002).

Our common experience too indicates straight - forward association of stress with increased medical emergencies like –

- Accidents
- Suicides
- Alcoholism and
- Drug Abuse

All these immoderations have direct correspondence with interpersonal relations. Occurrence of any of these events may be a starting point in initiating disturbance in family, social, and personal life, which ultimately results in lowered productivity and actual lowered production.

A person under stress is more prone to get involved in an accident. An individual, caught in financial difficulties is likely to resort to extreme behaviour like suicide. Commonly we do read in newspapers that a farmer has committed suicide for want of monetary resources / excessive debt, or loss of crops. Stresses like, failures in life (e.g., loss of love object, loss in business etc.) often may lead many individuals to indulge in chronic alcoholism or drug use.

Stress Related Disorders

- — High Blood pressure / Hypertension
- — Cardiovascular diseases/CHD – Coronary Heart Diseases
- — Atherosclerosis
- — Diabetes
- — Ulcer- peptic ulcer
- — Cancer
- — Arthritis
- — Asthma
- — Dermatitis

Plus

- Common cold,
- Persistence of wound or recovery from surgical wounds,
- Anxiety and depression / depressive mood
- Headache – Migraine headache
- Lowered resistance to illness / probability of every kind of illness

Increase in

- Accidents
- Suicides
- Alcoholism and
- Drug Abuse

Overall disturbed family, social, and personal life = lowered productivity / actual lowered production

1.3 What are the Common Causes of Stress?

It is obvious that prolonged stress can goad you to chronic illness/illnesses.

What are the factors that cause such chronic and severe diseases in us reducing our resistance to fight against illnesses and decrease our overall productive output?

Factually speaking, no one can predict definitively what causes stress; no one can tell 'who' will be stressed with 'what'; because, reasons of stress are different for different people. A thing that creates tension in one may not at all be stressful for the other. Similarly, a thing that is highly stressful today may not be stressful tomorrow. However, if we go by research evidence and personal experience we are able to identify certain areas that create more or less stress in most people in general. Rather, it would be more appropriate to comment that difficulties in certain areas sponsor stress experience in majority common individuals. Jeff Davidson (1998) has quoted 'personal finance, career, too many responsibilities, marriage, health, children, loneliness, sex, relatives, and neighbours' as top ten stressors in order. Some people are stressed because of problems in one area, some are troubled by problems in another area and some are bothered by problems simultaneously in multiple areas. Generally, it is seen, problem in one area surreptitiously extends to the other area(s). For example, health problems may lead to financial difficulties, and financial problems may affect social interpersonal relationships adversely. Let us examine some of the most common problem- stress areas that appear relevant to majority Indian people.

1.3.1 Most Common Problem - Stress Areas

❖ *Financial - Money Matters*

Financial problems are one of the greatest stressors. Crisis related to personal finances bears high stress potency, may lead people to commit suicide. Sudden financial crunch, if continued for substantially longer period, can be highly detrimental. In Maharashtra (one of the developed states of India), there is a saying, "sagali songa aanata yetat paishache naahi" – 'one can create artificial aura of any thing but not of money'.

❖ *Occupation/Job related*

Having a job or not having a job, both may cause stress. The job or occupation you are in can be a great source of stress. Your Job stands for your personal identity and satisfaction in life. In the job, a multitude of factors are / can be responsible for your stress. Researchers working in this area have pointed out such stressors in job situation as - 'boss/superior', 'colleagues', 'subordinates', 'working conditions working places', 'occupational demands' etc. The stress generated due to various factors in job situation is collectively called 'job-stress' or 'occupational stress'. One major source could be your 'boss'; it may sound funny but certain qualities of your boss could be highly irritating to you and can be a cause of chronic stress in you. Troublesome attributes of the boss or authority figure are: a boss who is dishonest, biased, partial, unrealistically demanding, shouting (see Box – Job Stress Areas), mean minded, inefficient, confused and shortsighted or someone whom you simply do not get along well with. If you have temperamentally two different bosses and you are required to obey contradictory demands, then this is a cause of great stress. Unorganized boss too is highly stressful.

So far as your colleague - fellow worker is concerned, all the qualities of the superior that result in stress are equally applicable to him (her). In addition, your unreliable, deceitful, manipulative, non-cooperative, liar and quarrelsome co-worker may further amplify your miseries at workplace and also eventually at home.

Next comes your sub-ordinate or a worker - if your subordinate/assistant is slow, sluggish, dull, unreliable, inactive, un-intelligent – inefficient, impolite, and irregular then, this is another stressor in your life; it is highly stressful. Moreover, if you are held responsible for the work or no work of the subordinate and if you have no sufficient power to exercise control over him (her) then there is no parallel to your agony.

> Similarly, *working conditions* at the workplace - work-demands, and work-atmosphere can be potential causes of stress. Work over-load, stringent time deadlines, excessively high or low temperature at work place, insecure job, undemanding job, role ambiguity, value differences, poor technological support and training and fear of sophisticated advanced technology, workplace trauma, workplace violence etc. cause frustration and cause job stress.

Job Stress Areas

- Difficult Boss/ Subordinate / Co-worker
- Overtime at the Last moment
- Absence of clarity in work
- Conflicting Demands
- Expectation greater than the ability
- Insecure Job, frequent violence- unpleasant emotional and physical environment at work place,
- Inflexible work- conditions
- No probability of prosperity
- No recognition to hard-work / no reward for sincere hard work
- Responsibility of others' work
- Underutilization of your capabilities
- Limited or no scope for fulfillment of your abilities
- Excessive competition, fear of new technology
- Sandwiched between two temperamentally characteristically different bosses
- Lack of power to control

❖ ***Excessively many or less responsibilities***

Some people opt habitually for too many responsibilities. Ms. Sheela may want to demonstrate herself as an extra ordinary efficient worker and therefore volunteers for every opportunity of additional work in the office, and she also wants to prove herself as an ideal caring mother (*Super Mom*) and daughter-in-law (*Super Snusha*) at home, and eventually be caught in a whirlpool.

Just as overburdening work is stressful so also is less work, escaping from assigned work or duty, too, is harmful. Those, who verbally take pride in proclaiming 'how skillfully they avoided work and enjoyed loafing' – do not really feel happy. In reality that keeps pinching the person somewhere in one corner of the heart inside - might not be overtly but definitely covertly. Self-nagging thought consciously or unconsciously troubles them: 'I have avoided responsibility', 'shame on me, I could have/ should have done it, though it was my duty I did not perform, - not an appreciable gesture', 'I am not a sensible worker etc. etc. Not doing duties / escaping from duties often promotes health - compromising behaviours. A person who shies away responsibility is usually seen whiling away time by engaging himself (or herself) in unwanted undesirable extra eating or drinking or smoking or grumbling or ruminating. What do you do when you flee from duty - you go to canteen and order a cup of tea or a cigarette or 'one plate samosa' (Indian dish prepared with potato and wheat flour) or you indulge in gossiping! You are stuffing when your body does not require it; you are cogitating negative thoughts and negative emotions, and loose peace of mind. Obviously, it has to have unfavorable effects on your body, on your mind, and your entire physical as well as psychological health.

❖ *Children- related*

Stress related to children has many faces. Children of any age can be a source of stress. When they are young, parents are worried about their safety, health; when they become older - reach teen age, parents become anxious about their adventurous rebellious erratic behaviour. Many parents and citizens in general, frequently complain about youngsters' irresponsible, directionless behaviour, and 'value vacuum'. They feel that young generation has deviated 'too much' from moral standards, follow no standards of discipline, follow no rules, and wonder, 'what has happened to these people'? They have no specific time to get up in the morning, no time to return home at night, no curtsey to inform father or mother regarding their whereabouts, bla - bla. Every elderly / senior citizen must have had experience of a missed heartbeat when an adolescent had passed by on his (her) motorbike with a speed of 90-100 km. right in the middle of a busy main road of the city.

Old-aged parents of adult children remain under stress, because their **adult child - son (or daughter)** 'has no time to talk to them', they (parents) are not respected at home; they feel, they are 'left alone'. In India, many households still run the tradition of joint family big or small - containing senior parents, adult couple and young kids. The stress of the Adult – Child cum Parent is peculiar; he (or she) is faced with a strange emotional dilemma. This adult-child-parent is sandwiched between Child and Parent. This 'Adult-child-parent', performing a duty of a 'father' and 'son'(or 'mother and daughter') concurrently, is in a fix; when he (or she) comes home after a day's work in the evening, his/her father expects that he should drop him (the father) (or her - the mother) at temple; at the same time his (or her) son is eagerly waiting for 'his dad' (or mom) to take him (son) to fun-fare exhibition which he (as a father) or she (as a mother) had promised in the morning. If father's demand is satisfied the son is upset; if the son's demand is fulfilled, the father feels his son is no longer 'his' son, has no respect and feeling for him; the dilemma continues and relations become strained and as a result family atmosphere is blemished.

> The adult child is caught between 'approach – approach' conflict, and ends up in avoidance - avoidance reaction and the ultimate result is unrelenting stress.

- ***Marriage- related***

Marriage is a double-edged stress. Marriage may be a desirable event in an individual's life but it is not without stress. Demands and pressures that come along with marriage may boost stress in many. It calls for more adjustments. By marrying, you have already invited additional responsibility of your (likely) children, their future, their development, their settlement etc. It inherently inserts new responsibilities, new relationships. You have to learn to establish and maintain new 'always under scrutiny' relationships. You need to adjust with finances, sharing of personal space, restriction on independence, control on 'your time' - your free time is shared by someone, you are required to cut-short your personal expenses to accommodate partner's expectations etc.

To remain single without marriage is also not without worry. Following celibacy by choice may be difficult due to societal pressures and peer pressures; may not be socially respected in your culture. On the other hand lack of companion may add to your loneliness/aloneness.

- ***Health-related***

One's own illness or family member's infirmity is a major cause of concern. Chronic health problem or major illness of a member in the house throws additional burden of adjustments on family members. For example, time adjustment is required to meet routine work, financial adjustment to increased load, and social adjustments. Personal life gets disturbed. Sometimes the whole family has to sever significant social contacts - all participation in social life comes to an end. Pressure due to ill health is very severe when ill person is a breadwinner. It also decreases resistance against diseases. Simple routine joys may generate guilt in the person.

❖ *Sex- related*

Sex - related problems, is a big source of stress. Major difficulties related to sex behaviour, are - 'performance anxiety', fear of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), fear of other sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted sex relationships or desired but unapproachable relationship, pressure of peers for sex relationships or against celibacy or social or personal pressure regarding celibacy – all are potential causes of distress. The fundamental difficulty with sex problems is, they are not openly and systematically discussed and talked, and therefore, pressure mounts. If at all sex /sex behaviour is talked or expressed openly (e.g., in movies) usually it is presented in the form of 'exhibition' lend more to problems than solution.

❖ *Aloneness*

Aloneness or loneliness is a double agent. Some people experience stress, for, they do not get a few moments 'for themselves'; they are surrounded by people all the time. Contrary to this, some are sad, unhappy and grieved because they have no one to talk to. These days, senior citizens in cities face this problem and this has taken a grievous form especially in nuclear family settings, many old people long for a plain simple courteous sentence from someone.

Relations or Relatives- related

Every relative close or distant – father, mother, brother, sister, cousin, in laws etc. carry potential to create stress in you.

You are already late to start from home to catch the 'bus' in time. Your respected 'Uncle' has arrived from his hometown without prior intimation (to pay a loving visit to his nephew and family), and throws affectionate 'demand': will you arrange a bucketful of hot water for bath? He does not forget to tell you 'I shall be taking light food only, plain 'khichadi' (rice mixed with lentil-moong / masur dal) will be enough for me'. Your maid has already gone home; pressure mounts on you.

Sometimes relatives may pose conflicting demands, clashing expectations and you are required to carry them out much against your will.

Your distant relative has kept his 'fridge' in your drawing room for just three days. Three months are over; it is still occupying space of your sufficiently packed flat. The presence of a fridge in the corner is a hair in your eye.

Neighbour-related

Neighbours create stress in various ways. You come home after a hectic and tiring day. You want to relax calmly; just at that moment your neighbour's young lad starts rap music and start dancing along with his friends.

You want to take a nice quiet sleep at night but your neighbour spoils it. Everyday you are obliged with loud squabble. Your filthy neighbour's family may be a persistent source of your stress. For such and many other reasons your neighbour may make you experience persistent stress daily.

❖ *Religious*

Religious stress at personal and family level is commonly found in India. Many live under stress for a year or more, for, they failed to fulfill the committed visit to a sacred place and ascribe to it every negative event that occurs in their life. They lose peaceful sleep because they could not perform the routine ritual this year. Some remainunhappy because they could not perform routine Puja (Worship of God) today. They are upset with the thought and remain restless throughout the day shouldering the 'burden of God'.

❖ *Spiritual*

A peculiar kind of stress is experienced by a few. Some people feel that they are going away from God; they are not on the path of the Divine; they are distracted from spiritual life.

Major Common Problem-Stress Areas

- Money related problems/Economical difficulties
- Occupation / Job related
- Excessively many / excessively less responsibilities
- Marriage-related
- Children-related
- Health Related
- Sex related
- Aloneness or Loneliness
- Relations or Relatives related
- Neighbour related
- Religious
- Spiritual

1.3.2 Other Crucial Factors

Some more crucial factors that cause psychophysical distress, include –

Insufficient sleep,

Inadequate nutrition or

Inappropriate diet/food,

Poor self–image,

Time pressure,

Living at disadvantageous places such as a village,

Not to have friends,

Not to have relatives,

Having home in criminal locality or insecure *mohalla* (locale).

These factors are usually interlinked and most of the times act upon individual in amalgamation. People, these days, go for late night movies or parties, take food at odd times, go to bed quite late, find difficult to compensate for it (sleep) in busy day's working schedule the next day - ultimately (insufficient sleep) results in physical and psychological strain and stress.

- Inadequate **nutrition** causes lot many problems in health and working capacity. Current fashion among people, of opting for otside dinners or deserts at odd places, and odd hours can create various health problems such as indigestion, excessive eating, disturbed sleep etc. Inadequate sleep itself is a serious health hazard.
- For many people their **negative self - image** is a source of continuous stress, seen or unseen. Many people perceive themselves as 'too fat', or 'too thin',

or 'unimpressive', or 'ugly' and carry the load through out life. They suffer from an inferiority complex all their life and live personally a very miserable life. They feel apprehensive during interpersonal confrontation, which often results in forced social withdrawal, lack of confidence, and multiple adjustment problems.

- **Living in village/s or country - side** creates stress in many. Lack of city privileges like opportunities for self - fulfillment, variety in pursuits, food, availability of eatables, recreation, access to information and acquaintances - limited communication, etc. hamper the progress of self development; and can cause overt or covert dissatisfaction and frustration.
- **Lack of friends or relatives** is a stressful condition in which no scope for ventilation of accumulated pressures is possible; it is characterized by deficit in need for communication, succor, caring and sharing.
- **Insecure surroundings locale** causes tremendous stress on the individual and family members. Unidentified fear of physical and psychological injury, untoward happening or unprecedented death constantly occupies the thought process and leads to heavy pressure.
- One more stress factor which is highly neglected or rejected but needs to be paid attention to especially in India, is, **'lack of cooperation' or 'non-participation' of a spouse in daily house hold work'** or home related responsibilities. This also applies to other (non-participating) family member. A family member who is not contributing or does not wish to

co-operate and co-participate in everyday household tasks, can be a perennial cause of stress for the other family member who is compelled to shoulder all the weight of domestic necessities single - handedly. If this lone conscientious person is employed in a demanding job, then the whole affair is tremendously stressful.

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2

CHAPTER

What is Stress?

- *Nature of Stress*
    - ❖ *Some Definitions of Stress*
    - ❖ *When Do We Experience Stress?*
- *Stress Response*
- *Salient Features of Stress*

Understand stress this way too.

- ❖ *A] Essentiality of stress*
- ❖ *B] Stress has positive side*
- ❖ *C] Joy of stress*
- *Common Terms that designate Types of Stress.*

2.1 Nature of Stress

Undoubtedly, we all feel we know what stress is, and yet we falter at getting correct meaning of it. We can immediately spell out - stress means unhappiness caused when things go wrong. We generally perceive stress as something external. Variety of external stimuli can produce stress. When somebody insults we feel stress.

Stress means tension. Stress means worry, grief, anxiety, depression, restlessness, headache, irritation, threat etc. The reaction to stress, however, we do recognize involve arousal of emotions, chemical changes, immunological changes, and psychological - behavioural changes in the person. In this sense stress is internal. We are puzzled whether to recognize stress as internal or external. Ultimately we grope at its multifarious nature and realize it is difficult to conceive or define stress in definite terms. Perhaps it is a combination of both. Outside stressor is acting on the individual and something in the individual is responding to the stressor and or vice versa. Anything that causes stress to the individual is called stressor.

The origin of the word stress we find in the Latin word *'stringi'*, which means 'to be drawn tight'.

When we say, 'I'm stressed' or 'I'm under stress', we mean, by this, the way stress is felt, experienced, and affected our body and mind and life and spirit. Stress reaction may occur either to internal or external stimulus. Stress may be understood at both levels physiological and psychological. Let us see how, stress has been defined by various scientists working in the field. Let us analyze and understand nature of stress, experience of stress. These definitions may tell us what stress is, what are the consequences of stress, when and how stress is felt and experienced, what and why the connexion between stress and disease and health. And also they may guide us develop insight, how to overcome it.

2.1.1 Some Definitions of Stress

The most regarded definition of stress is by Hans Selye (1993),

"Stress is the nonspecific (that is - common) result of any demand upon the body, be the effect mental or somatic".

Lazarus's (1966): "stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that "demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize."

"Stress is whatever stresses people .." Hann (1993)

'Stress, refers to a response of the organism to a noxious or threatening condition" (Pearlin, Liberman, Menaghan & Mullan, 1981).

"Stress is experienced in the condition in which person – environment transactions lead to perceived discrepancy between the physical or psychological demands of a situation and the resources of the individual's biological, psychological, or social systems" (Lovallo, 1997; Singer & Davidson, 1986; Trumbull & Appley, 1986).

Stress at phenomenological level can be defined as imbalance. Imbalance at physical level leads to pains, ailments, diseases etc. Imbalance at mental level leads to emotional upsurges – anxieties, worries, anger, apprehension, and misery.

Stress at body level, are accumulated as stiffness of joints, tense muscles, painful ankles, and the like. Stress at psychological level is accumulated by way of developing strong likes and dislikes, preferences for this or that, intense inclinations toward specific attitudes, and expectations of various kinds.

Physiologically prolong stress condition leads to wear and tear of body systems, tissues; brings strain on central nervous system. The individual has to adapt continuously to come to baseline, to maintain homeostasis, causes significant strain. It is a demand upon energy. It involves efforts covert and overt, physiological and psychological both.

Thus stress is a psychological interpretation of the stressor, characterized by physiological as well as psychological processes expressed by internal and external (psychosomatic) symptoms.

Brief Definitions

Stress : a psycho-physiological condition occurs due to a 'perceived threat'

Stressor : a thing that produces stress experience (physiological/psychological)

Strain : The person's physiological and Psychological response to stress

2.1.2 When Do We Experience Stress?

Stress is felt when demand is not within personal limits; person feels that his (her) capacities are not enough to cope with the environmental demand.

When someone shouts at you, you feel stress, when you are faced with (too) high (or too low) temperature you experience stress, if you are caught up in financial problem you are stressed. So being in difficult situation that you find 'not in your command', - is a stress for you.

You start experiencing stress when you begin doubting your capability to bear the challenge, which you have taken up or when you are not sure of the necessary ability in you needed for the task.

You experience stress when you want to reach somewhere but reach elsewhere.

You experience stress when you have ability to do the task but you don't do it / you experience tension when you turn away from duties, you do not perform in spite of having capacity to do it; You experience stress when you do not carry out rightful responsibility even though you have power over it.

You experience stress when tension or pressures outside or inside home real or imaginary become too much to deal with.

Demands perceived as exceeding the resources cause stress.

When Do You Experience Stress?

- When you find you are unable to fulfill / meet the challenge = =
- When you are 'unsure' of your capability or capabilities to complete the task = =
- When you want to reach somewhere and you reach elsewhere = =

You experience stress

2.2 Stress Response

Stress response is an emotional response (anxiety) accompanied with psychosomatic reactions. This response is accompanied with *Autonomous Nervous System* (ANS) arousal. The autonomic changes due to stress exemplify 'fight or flight' reaction described by Walter Canon (1929). Organism may respond to a sensed endangered survival, typically, in either of two ways. It may attack - fight for existence or may run away (flight) from the danger situation. In both eventualities, body is prepared for instant reaction.

Sympathetic nervous system of ANS gets activated in emergency situation to save the person from impending danger. It prepares the individual physiologically to face the threat so that survival will remain intact. Sympathetic nervous system sympathizes with the individual in times of emergency brings out changes in the body to get ready to act promptly. Physiological reaction to stress begins with Rapid surge in heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, muscle-tension, and other ANS responses like tachycardia, and dryness of mouth, sweating, and blood sugar. It also brings about change in blood circulation. This preparation facilitates both types of reactions fight and flight. If you want to brawl against or if you want to flee from the scene - in both cases, your body needs to be in '*ready to act instantly*' condition. The Nature prepares the individual physiologically for quick immediate action. This is something like 'get set ready go' situation. Recollect the stances assumed by two enemies confronted in the battle - field with sword or recall a posture of an athlete who is about to take a 'start' in an international Olympic running competition. You are physiologically and psychologically ready to 'take on' or 'run away' from the scene. You are physically primed to defend yourself in crisis situation. When crisis is over, parasympathetic nervous system takes over and homeostasis is replaced. But, if, the crisis is protracted, stress is prolonged, the autonomous - sympathetic changes also continue.

These physiological reactions to **prolonged** stress are regarded non-specific (Selye (1956). This means, **Physiological reactions to prolonged stress take place regardless of the type of the stressor.** Our body will react with similar kind of physiologic changes, whether the stressor is a strained interpersonal relationship or cold pressor test or a loss of dear one.

Autonomous Nervous System

SURVIVAL

Sympathetic	Parasympathetic
Emergency	Maintenance
Fight or Flight	Stay and Play

Instant changes due to stress

Rapid surge in -
Heart Rate
Blood pressure
Respiration
Muscle tension

and Other ANS Responses
Tachycardia,
Dryness of mouth,
Sweating,
Blood sugar

In fact, no body - system remains unaffected when stress is present. The effects of stress are systemic. The other bodily changes of stress are # Electrical, # Neurochemical, # Hormonal, and # Enzymatic. They can be very well measured in lab conditions; hence, are called *Objective Effects of Stress.* They briefly mentioned in the Boxes below.

Other Objective Effects of Stress

❖ *Neurochemical*

Epinephrine
Nor- epinephrine
Dopamine
Serotonine
Histamine
Acetyl-choline
G.A.B.A.
Endorphins
Encephalins
Dinorphine
Others

Other Objective Effects of Stress

❖ *Hormonal*

Leutinising Hormone
Melatonine (Anti-Cancer)
Growth-Hormone
A.C.T.H.
Prolactin
T.C.H.
Others

Other Objective Effects of Stress

❖ *Enzymatic*

Mono-Amine-Oxydase Inhibitor
Tyrosine-Hydroxylase
Dopamine *b* Hydroxylase
Others

Other Objective Effects of Stress

❖ *Electrical*

E.E.G. - Electro-encephalogram
E.C.G. - Electro-cardiogram
E.D.G. - Electro-dermogram
E.M.G. - Electro-myogram

Thus The STRESS RESPONSE is a coping strategy employed (naturally) by an individual TO a 'Life Threatening Danger'. It basically comes forward to reduce the impact of a Stressor, to initiate problem solving behaviour. It may prompt you to consult a physician or seek help from a friend for dilemma. Stress response is an adjustment called in to cope with overpowering situation. In this sense, it is a defense mechanism.

In a way Stress Response is 'absolutely necessary for survival' of the organism *FOR P*reservation of Life.

Stress Response is given

TO – a 'Life Threatening Danger'-
a Stimulus: STRESSOR

FOR – Preservation of Life, 'absolutely necessary for survival' of organism –

It's a *'God's gift' and*
NOT a disease in itself.

Psychological Characteristics of Stress Response

- It is an emotional response with somatic accompaniments
- Is a coping strategy
- Is a defense mechanism

2.3 Salient Features of Stress

Understand Stress This Way Too

A] Essentiality of Stress in Life

Commonly the term stress reminds us of its negative effects. In a common man's mind, it has negative connotation. We generally regard stress as harmful, destructive; detrimental that grounds various diseases or destroys happiness. You may wish let there be no stress at all in my life. However, if you look at stress with stable mind you find stress is not always bad; on the contrary, you will realize life without stress will be unsavory, inert. Hans Selye who coined the term 'stress' (Selye, 1936, 1956), and who has done pioneering work in stress research, has very correctly said, "To be totally without stress is to be dead", "Complete freedom from stress is death" (Selye, 1974). Stress - less condition is as good as being dead, dead like state.

In Attainment of life goals stressors are milestones. For successful task completion enormously less stress is as detrimental as excessively high stress. Stress at optimum level is always desirable and necessary. This situation can be compared with blood pressure and its role in human being's existence. To survive and remain sufficiently active, within average range blood pressure is essential. Rise in blood pressure beyond a certain limit or drop in blood pressure, below a certain point signals danger. 'No blood pressure at all' is also dangerous – signifies a condition of the dead. Similarly having no stress implies no life in life and too much stress warns a risk to the life. In the absence of optimum stress no requisite initiative to perform the task is undertaken by the individual and it is highly impossible to continue the task at hand effectively under excessively high pressure.

B] Stress has positive side too

Stress warns you of further worsening well in advance, it cautions you to take care of your health; in fact it acts like your friend who tries to help you by putting hard facts before you. It reminds you of required essential changes in your behaviour so that you can restore your health

Many times we feel that only undesirable unwanted events cause stress in us, this is not perfectly true. Wanted and desirable events too can cause stress. For example pre-planned journey fixed by us, pleasure trip, promotion, coveted new job, attending party, meeting someone with an appointment etc. are all desirable and wanted happenings but also produce stress. Promotion in the job may accompany with increased responsibilities; attending party, meeting someone with an appointment is not without time pressure. We must note that some stresses are wanted some are not.

C] Joy of Stress

Stress is enjoyable.

Stress can be well understood in terms of a continuum. At its one end there is '**good stress**' (is called '**Eustress**'), the stress that is caused by the things or events which generate happiness in you, it motivates you to perform better, it mobilizes your energies to perfection, Some stresses you really enjoy. You prefer to remain under stress is called "a joy of stress". It can directly or indirectly assist you in your personal and social growth. It may supplement in your personal as well as social achievements and development.

On the other side, there is a **'Bad Stress'** (is called **'Distress'**). Bad stress is a stress resulted by the events or things that produce irritation, sadness, frustration, disappointment, ill feeling, pain sorrow etc. in you. It immediately brings unpleasantness distaste in you and therefore unwanted. In fact this is a kind of stress, which you wish to want to 'manage'. So, truly speaking we should speak of distress management rather than stress management. However you frequently notice people talk about stress management. This is so for simple and straightforward reason; it is excessive stress (in either direction - excessively high or excessively low) that has negative impact on the body and mind and spirit.

Interestingly, **positive stress can become negative and negative can become positive.** Presume, you like picnic. So, on a picnic day you get up early in the morning finish off your morning chores quickly and you are ready well in time (unlikely in your case, but for picnic you do all this happily) because 'you like picnic'. Imagine you are asked to go on picnic every day. So now you will have to get up daily before sun rises in the east and finish off hastily all your morning chores, it will become highly stressful perhaps distressful.

By nature, you are not inclined to go to parties but your roommate forcibly took you to one, there, you met with your beloved old friend with whom you are at this moment convening after a long gap, and your distasteful distressful party immediately transforms into an enjoyable evening. *(Here lies one of the principles of stress management – 'it is possible to convert stress into delight'.)*

One of the core aspects of stress is, it (whether due to desired or undesired events) produces strain on nervous system. Extremes of stress – too high or too low stress, whether positive or negative, wanted or unwanted, desirable or undesirable, may prove detrimental psycho-physically.

Stress

Good Stress	**Bad Stress**
(Eustress)	*(Distress)*
Desired	Undesired
e.g., play, meeting friend create positive emotions	e.g.,loss of dear one, quarrel with neighbour create negative emotions
Joy of stress	**Agony of stress**

Excessively less or more stress: hazardous to health

Thus we can say stress is a sum total of psycho-physiological reactions. The interrelationship is not always additive but it could be reciprocally multiplicative too.

Specific experience of psycho - physical adaptive reactions means Stress.

Felt stress is always psycho – physiological or physico - psychological.

Stress is simultaneously 'a reaction', 'a process' and, 'an experience'!

It is, *at manifest level → a response*

at thinking/understanding level → a process

at experiential level → a feeling.

Definition

(Stress is a psycho-physiological condition in response to [overtly or covertly] 'perceived threat' / perceived discrepancy)

Stress experience
Is a felt stress

When life demands are appraised exceeding personal resources, ability

(Stress = Reaction +
= Process + = Result
= Experience +

2.4 Common Terms that Designate Types of Stress

Taking into consideration qualitative and or quantitative aspects of stress the following types of stress can be noted. They represent more the preferential titles to describe the condition rather than designating core differences among them.

- **Eustress** (from the Greek eu = good,) conveys the meaning of 'good stress' – usually a result of desired wanted event - motivates you, activates you, inspires you for dynamic action generally accompanied with positive feelings e.g., joy, pleasantness.
- **Neustress** – a neutral stress - neither good nor bad – in which you remain indifferent. It may not be a stress like condition. Thought of concern may

occupy your mind but may not cause serious apprehension or arousal, may be in response to a news typhoon hitting barren land.

- **Distress** – (from the Latin *dis* = bad) "bad" stress – conveys most common 'meaning' of stress, usually undesired unwanted, accompanied with negative feelings e.g., sorrow, frustration, grief, may arise in situations such as failure, death of some loved one, inevitable catastrophe.
- **Hyperstress** – excess of stress subjective feeling of high stress, commonly accompanied with fatigue, strain, may be experienced when under time pressure; This specifies quantitative dimension of stress; may be an aspect of eustress or distress.
- **Hypostress** - deficient stress; this also designates quantitative dimension of stress, used to indicate amount of stress; may be an aspect of eustress or distress, may accompany with inertia dullness.
- **Acute Stress** – also called *short – term stress;* is the most common stress. This designates quantitative dimension - duration of the stress; may be an aspect of eustress or distress. This is usually a reaction to an immediate threat – may come from demands and pressures of the recent past or immediate future. Stressors such as noise, crowding, isolation, or infection may result in acute stress.
- **Episodic Acute stress** – is similar to the above one. The individual suffers from acute stress frequently. For example, some people are always in rush but always late and remain under stress time and again.

- **Chronic Stress:** also called *long – term stress.* This is an ongoing long-term stress situation/s that are not short lived; this also designates duration of the stress. This is generally a crushing stress; destroys mind, body and life – overall well being ness of the individual. Highly pressured work, strained long-term interpersonal relationships, long lasting loneliness etc. are a few examples of chronic stressors. The person does not see a way out; finds highly painful. Chronic stress may lead to violence - suicide, killings, or heart attack and the like.

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3
CHAPTER

Stress and Illness / Disease

- *Stress and Common Questions*
    - *How can stress lead to illness?*
    - *When does a stressor become stressful?*
    - *Why some people are more stressed and others less?*
    - *Are there really advantages of stress?*
- *GAS (General adaptation Syndrome) And Illness*
- *PAS (Psychological Adaptation Syndrome)*
- *Why some people are more stressed?*
    - *Threshold of stress*
    - *Personality And Stress*
- *Are there (really) Advantages of stress?*

3.1 Stress and Common Questions

How can stress lead to illness?

When does a stressor become stressful?

Why some people are more stressed and others less?

Are there really advantages of stress?

These are some questions that usually trouble us over and over again. Let us find an answers to them. The following deliberation may help us find logical answers and offer us stress-dynamic of disease.

We can understand the stress - dynamics of disease by thoughtfully understanding the process of stress reaction, the manner in which our body responds to a stressor.

> The process begins with an analysis of event. Our brain plays significant role in the whole process. Brain interacts with event and finds out event as threatening. So, whether event is stressful or not, depends on our brain's interpretation of it; the way brain understands and translates event at physical level will determine our body's reaction to it. Event becomes stressful when brain deciphers it frightening/dreadful. Stress reaction is body's communication in physiological language. It is a cognized consciousness expressed in psycho-physiological reactions.

It is a cognitive appraisal – a mental process, by which we determine, whether a demand of potentially stressful event threatens me, my physical or psychological well being (Cohen & Lazarus, 1983; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When confronted (with event), we ask "what does this mean to me?" Do I possess the resources to meet the demand'? "Am I able or not able to cope? When demands are perceived exceeding their resources causes stress. We must note that brain does not differentiate between stress in actual situation and imagination. That is why many people get surprised and say, now I am not living with my quarrelsome son – in – law, why should I suffer from high blood pressure; I had six hours tussle with my boss at office in the morning but now I am at home why should I get breathlessness. This is because you are shipping continuous thoughts regarding office tension all the time - practically every minute, even at home; your body is reacting to it in a more or less similar manner though right now you are not in the office now. For the brain, it is the same situation - unless and until it is informed or mediated to it otherwise. You are constantly carrying a monkey (stress) on your shoulder consciously or unconsciously; your body ought to react to it by arousal response.

That is why it is said stress lies in the eye of the perceiver (Hann, 1993)

(And here lies one principle of stress management that it is possible to alleviate stress reaction by cognitive intervention.)

When Does Stress Become Stressful?

Stress = game of CNS (central nervous system.)

When brain translates event as "stressful"

(Event = any given occurrence ,
Event perceived as stressful = "stressor")

Stress lies in the eyes of perceiver

3.2 GAS (General Adaptation Syndrome) — Illness

Hans Selye (1956, 1976, 1985) has aptly described the whole process of — organism's reaction pattern of adaptation to chronic stress. Selye observed, our body responds to stress with a series of physiological reactions.

This course of chain of reactions bears the caption 'General Adaptation Syndrome' (GAS). We know that these reactions take place regardless of the type of stressor.

When we inspect this course of reactions thoughtfully, we realize it can enhance our comprehension and better our understanding of the relationship between stress and illness. Selye's GAS augment our insight into a disease process. Knowledge of GAS process helps us know how disease can set in while adapting to stress, while coming into terms with stress. This knowledge will also tell us what to do and not to do, to move on the path of health or to free ourselves from the negative impact of stress.

If we regard human entity a mind – body integral then mental adaptation shall also fall along the bodily response pattern; a parallel chain of reactions can be conceived at mental level. It is imperative that similar mode would be valid for understanding adaptation at psychological level. Physiological and psychological adaptation should go parallel. And intervention or no intervention at either level should effect reciprocally. Instead of referring GAS to only physiological reactions better it would be, to speak of physiological and psychological adaptation syndrome or physio-psychological or psycho-physiological adaptation syndrome (PAS). Or on the same line we can plainly speak of Psychological Adaptation Syndrome.

Stress Process - GAS

GAS has been described in three phases. The initial, is labeled as '*alarm reaction*', the second is called '*stage of resistance*', and the third is known as '*exhaustion*'.

When any event is perceived posing threat stress reaction begins, brain gets activated and signals the body to get ready prepared for emergency to handle. It mobilizes defense mechanisms; sounds alert, and life sustaining functions (fight or flight) begin come into action immediately. *The first stage* in stress process – '*alarm reaction*' is initiated. Sympathetic nervous system set in motion, autonomous changes occur - for example, blood pressure is increased, heart rate breathing rate is increased, blood sugar is increased, output of pituitary gland is increased; adrenaline is secreted, epinephrine is released; adrenocorticotropic hormone ACTH* (also called stress hormone.) is released, mouth goes dry etc.

If threat is removed stress is removed and homeostasis is restored. But, when threat continues stress also continues and second stage, '*resistance*', overtakes. In face of continued stress Triggered defense system remains continuously activated; it has to work faster, harder and continuous. This means defense reactions to go on non-stop; So, stress is continued higher blood pressure level is also continued, it remains raised; breathing rate remains increased; blood sugar levels too stay at higher side. Thus, altered physiological reactions remain altered continuously if not intervened. Your body resists. These changes warn you that it (stress) is present. But, if the stress still continues further, these changes also continue. When they persistently continue for quite some time, these signal changes transform into 'symptoms' of illness. The state of 'continuously raised blood pressure' for prolonged period makes you 'hypertensive' and on one day your condition is diagnosed as 'Hypertension' by a physician; continuously raised blood sugar levels for significant period may make you 'diabetic', you are suffering from 'diabetes'. Stress accumulates illness proliferates. Threat is still there stress is still there. Your body tries hard to cope persistently, at last there comes a time/point your resistance reaches its limit, your body gets exhausted, rejects to work faster harder continuous further; gives up resistance, eventually results in a breakdown of resistance; this gives way to the third stage 'exhaustion'; resistance weakens and you are completely exhausted - culminate into death may be a premature death. We say, 'Mr. Deshpande died of heart attack at quite an early age' or 'Mr. Sharma died of dangerously heightened level of blood sugar' and so on. This is something like an athlete's performance at track – think of an Olympian gold medallist of 100 meter race, if required to run that fast continuously for quite some more time say for an hour or so, what would happen? If compelled to do so, s/he is sure to develop some serious problem and sooner (or later) will collapse. Running beyond limits can lead to complete exhaustion – collapse. Point to be kept in mind that after a certain limit, body is unable to resist actively if the duration of stress is furthered beyond its capacity. It may culminate into a complete collapse. Similarly, state of sustained stress demands body defense mobilization continuously at higher levels which is very likely to have serious impact on the body (mind and spirit), and may ultimately end up in serious troubles.

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* ACTH: adrenocorticotropic hormone, the adrenal-stimulating pituitary hormone

3.3 PAS (Psychological Adaptation Syndrome)

At psychological level → individual thinks, plans to take action, *initiates* organization — lot of thinking to the extent of preoccupation leading to loss of concentration, excessive worry, anger etc. may be observed, reappraises situation tries to mobilize resources, participates actively in searching for solutions to problems; explores probable help –targets, if successful mental stability is restored (stage of **preparation**). But if stress continued, efforts did not culminate into desired outcome → *vigorous attempts* are made –topsy-turvy changes in attitudes, unrealistic expectations excessive working, stubborn adherence to preferences may be seen; tries to utilize additional inner and outer resources; keenly cooperates in resisting accompanying physical discomfort, may comply totally or non-compliance altogether with the treatment (stage of **resistance**). Further, in a state of continued pressure a stage comes, threshold of tolerance reduces to minimum, the whole situation is perceived as totally hopeless, *helplessness* overpowers; vulnerability increases; approaches a point - one gives up, hope is shattered will is lost – efforts too are forsaken, gives up resistance succumbs to pressures / circumstances (stage of **exhaustion – lost**).

This is how a stress/stressor can lead you to exhaustion to illness or to a serious health problem.

Development of Specific disease will be in sync with dispositional predilection of specific organ or organ reactivity or organ inferiority; may also be explained in terms of L. A. S. – Local Adaptation Syndrome. Reactions are limited to particular organ or part, for example eyes, or tissue or inflammation of a specific part. In such case exhaustion will be selective localized, only that part will be affected.

GAS

GAS

Stressor

(Threat perception)

a) Alarm reaction

(Activation of defense system)

(Fight or flight)

b) Resistance

(Defense system works hard and continuous)

c) Exhaustion

(Breakdown of resistance: death)

DISEASE

Disease

Reaction to Stress

Stressor

↓

Signal symptoms

↓

Illness Symptoms

↓

Disease

PAS (Psychological Adaptation Syndrome)

Thinking begins – deliberation

Alarm Reaction →loss of concentration, worry, anger, apprehension, Crying, worrying, dreaming etc.

Excesses

Resistance →Extremes of behaviours → Unrestrained hard work, Unreasonable debt, contrary behaviours and attitudes, Immoderate responses & drug use etc.

Exhaustion →resistance is broken : overtiredness. Complete *Withdrawal Vegetative existence.*

Journey from stress to illness can also be explained in terms of allostatic load. Accumulation of load is generated by repeated adaptation. When body is required to labour for repeated adaptation eventually may lead to accumulation of *load - allostatic load.* High levels of *allostatic load* may further lead to poor health and illness in the individual (Johanston-Brooks, Lewis, Evans, & Whalen, 1998; Seeman et al., 1997).

Graphic Representation of Stress Process

GAS (General Adaptation Syndrome)

Stressor
(Event)
↓
Threat Perception
(*Felt FEAR*)
↓
Activation of Brain
(*Sound Alert*)
↓

a) Activated Defense System
(Alarm Reaction) (*Flight or Fight*)
↓
[elevated adrenal flow, increased blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, increased blood sugar, release of ACTH: adrenocorticotropic hormone]

r) Overloaded Defense System
(Resistance) (*Continuous and fast*)
[accumulation of stress→symptoms→illness]
↓

e) Exhaustion
(Exhaustion) (*Death*)

(Commonly, we, frequently go through the first two stages of G.A.S. And learn to adapt to reactions. The stage of exhaustion or death occurs rapidly only when stress is excessively most severe.)

3.4 Why Some People are More Stressed and Others Less?

3.4.1 Threshold of Stress

Stressors always surround us though we do not feel stress usually. Many of us cope with potential daily stressors habitually; most people develop strategies to deal with stress reactions. Needless to say, we bear and transact with stress up to a certain level/limit. Stressor is not stressful until we declare, 'enough is enough, not more; it is now beyond my capacity'! When we start saying (perceiving) 'why should be 'I' only always, how long how many times should 'I' suffer, there should be a limit to one's suffering'- and the perspective towards the whole situation changes. We impose a boundary on our stress tolerance capacity. Negative unhealthy psychological side overwhelms and experience gets converted into excruciating burden. Here we are talking about **'stress threshold'**. **Stress threshold** is the level of stressor (frequency and magnitude) that the person can tolerate before negative feelings of stress occur and adversely affect performance. Naturally people vary with regard to stress threshold, some people have 'low threshold', even a slight disturbance in their daily routine can disturb them cause reduction in performance whereas some have 'higher threshold', they remain cool, calm and productive for longer (Newstrom & Davis, 2004, p. 374). Psychologically and physiologically stressor is just an ordinary event till it is perceived stressful. People who have short stress threshold may suffer more from stress than those who have higher threshold.

3.4.2 Personality and Stress

You will always find some people who remain unperturbed even in serious and severe stressful condition. There are certain people who take stress instantly, are vulnerable to stress. They invite stress, for example, Type A persons are more susceptible to yield to stress easily than Type B individuals.

Some personalities are known to insulate people from bad effects of stress.

Type A behaviour is characterized by intense ambition, competitive drive, time urgency, and easily evoked by hostility (Rosenman, 1978). Type A individuals are regarded to possess such typical characteristics as excessive competitive drive, persistent desire for recognition and advancement, persistent involvement in multiple functions to 'dead lines', an intense and sustained drive to achieve self – selected but poorly defined goals, continuous involvement in multiple and diverse functions subject to time restrictions, a habitual property to accelerate their pace of living and working, habitual property Propensity to accelerate the rate of execution of most physical and mental functions; extraordinary mental and physical alertness, aggressive and hostile feelings and also exhibit much higher serum cholesterol levels, faster clotting times (Friedman and Rosenman, 1959, 1960; Rosenman and Friedman, 1963; Rosenman, *et al.*, 1964; Russek and Zohman, 1958). Type B individuals are generally characterized by absence of type a behaviour patterns; they are less aggressive, more relaxed and easy-going and less impatient. Their life style often does not lead to impatience or competitive or hostile reactions.

Type A behaviour pattern (TABP) is considered as one of the risk factors of coronary heart disease (CHD); in fact this pattern is referred as a coronary – prone behaviour pattern (Feurstein, Labbe and Kuczmierczyk, 1986). A number of studies have shown association of TABP with CHD (Friedman and Rosenman, 1959; Kornitzer, Kittel, & De Backer, 1981; Rosenman, Brand, Sholitz, & Friedman, 1976; De Backer, Kornitzer & Kittel, 1983; Eaker, Abbott, & Kannel, 1989; Sundin, et al.,1995). The TABP has also been found related to severity of CAD – Coronary Artery Disorder (Derby & Pearson, 1989; Williams et al., 1988). Type A individuals of both sexes have shown higher serum cholesterol levels than Type Bs (Rosenman & Friedman, 1974; Weidner, Sexton, McLelland, Connor, & Matarazzo, 1987). Thus we note considerable research evidence showing higher sympathetic neural activity being associated with Type A personality; and we observe stress response involves sympathetic arousal.

As against Type A, *hardy personalities* are generally acknowledged to insulate people from bad effects of stress. Hardy personality is consisted of three components, namely i) Commitment [reflected through tendency to throw oneself into whatever one does with a sense of importance and meaningfulness in it], ii) Challenge [change is perceived as an incentive rather than threat to security], and iii) Control [have feeling of control over the events in their life] (Kobasa, 1979). Hardiness functions as a stress buffer and is found to influence work performance (Westman,

1990) as well as health (Okun, *et al.*, 1988). The three Cs lend optimistic outlook and act as a defense against stress – related disorders (Kobassa, 1979; Kobassa, *et al.*, 1994). Studies have shown that optimistic disposition helps people experience few physical symptoms due to academic stress (Scheier & Carver, 1987). Optimistic patients who had undergone bypass surgery were seen to heal quicker than the pessimistic patients (Scheier *et al.*, 1989; Taylor, 1991). That is why it is said 'be positive' and 'optimistic. It moderates stress reaction.

Spiritually oriented people set them apart by possessing certain attitudes characteristics and orientation toward life that enable them to stay away from severity of stress response. They generally ascribe events (positive or negative) in their life to the working of the Divine. They take life as a pious responsibility / gift / opportunity to realize the Divine. So, whatever happens in their life is according to Divine Will. They consider every occurrence a step necessary for further development within. They believe and have faith in higher working. They habitually meditate. They are inner oriented, generally calm and quiet integrally, peaceful within. They are typically described as '*Sthitpradnya*' स्थितप्रज्ञ – persons who remain unperturbed in grief as well as joy, do not easily yield to excitements (positive or negative); have equanimity of poise in grief and joy, can look at things and events and people with indifference or with *Sakshi – bhav* a sort of 'witnessing vrutti' witnessing attitude i.e., can experience the experience without involving themselves, in it. They can go beyond and raise level of consciousness. They can look at their own thoughts by standing back; let them pass, do not identify with them (thoughts), just witness, possess a certain impersonality. This may effect, as a result, a phenomenon of 'dissociation' – psycho - physical or physico-psychological dissociation in which Physiological changes do not affect psychological life and or psychological events do not influence physiological reactions or if at all they (events) affect each other the influence is marginal. Such effect will vary from person to person depending upon the control or mastery s/he has attained. To a greater or lesser degree, this general attitude and orientation of 'detachment', 'standing back' 'looking beyond' or 'going beyond' the common level, automatically result in experiencing of normal emotion/s without strain or struggle.

Jacques Vigne (1997) has quoted an example of physico-psychological dissociation in case of well-known sage Raman Maharshi who was operated for tumor on arm without anesthesia. **Experiment on meditation conducted on** young university subjects provide additional support to dissociation phenomenon due to meditation; it showed that individuals experience less pain or no pain due to needle prick in or immediately after meditation (Khubalkar, 2002; 2004; 2006). Good amount of research literature has evidenced meditators, having better mental health, self-esteem, and social openness (e.g., Alexander, 1991; Shapiro & Gilber, 1978).

Who are more *stressed?*	*Who are* less *stressed?*
'Low stress threshold'	'High stress threshold'
Type A Personality	Hardy personalities
Agitated, Impulsive	Spiritually Oriented / Sthitaprdnya– Peaceful within

3.5 Are there (really) Advantages of Stress?

General connotation of the word stress is negative. But stress is not always bad. We have already noted stress response is set off to defend the body your existence. In fact, it forewarns and tells you to take care of your 'self'. When it is within your reach it boosts your spirit, it makes you feel, and actually it tenders you a feel of 'A ha – experience'. When something concrete, you attain after putting in good struggle — the feeling sense of accomplishment at the moment, cannot be compared with anything else. It offers you complacency, feeling of achievement, sense of worth, a great sense of completion etc. Many times in stress situation only, you come to know that 'you have that ability'. Its presence is a premonition, it alerts you in advance so that you can organize your resources in an effective manner; thereby you can avert future loss of your health and wealth and personal growth. It is a double - edged weapon. As a friend it cautions you well in time and as a foe it may create personal and social and health problems.

Duel Nature of Stress

Stress is a friend

Stress is a foe

Advantages of Stress

Stress Response *prepares* you for prompt action

It *warns you of impending danger* to survival by producing psychophysical reactions. (Thus it can save you from future damage.)

It *enhances self - growth*

It *gives you pleasure of 'Joy of Stress'*

It *makes you aware of your height of abilities*

It *provides you opportunities to utilize your abilities to maximum*

Stress Response is a God's Gift and not a Disease/Curse in itself

❖ ❖ ❖

4

CHAPTER

Stress and Its Indicators

- *Hidden Aspect of Stress*
- *What are the markers of stress?*
    - ❖ *Signal Symptoms of Stress*
    - ❖ *Significant Symptoms of Stress*
    - ❖ *Resultant Symptoms of Stress*
    - ❖ *Indirect Symptoms of stress*
    - ❖ *Other Noticeable Sudden Contradictory Changes*

4.1 Hidden Aspect of Stress

Before allowing for acknowledging signs and symptoms of stress we must mull over an important typical feature of stress.

Interesting element of stress is, often, we are not aware of the existence of stress. Stress comes into our conscious awareness most of the times usually, only when we are diagnosed with chronic illness like hypertension or so; and the treating physician advises us to avoid stress, refrain from stress tension. Many times we do not know that *'this is stress'*. We presume certain happening or happenings a part of the daily routine; we do not feel, these things can generate stress; we suppose many stress symptoms as normal habitual reactions of everyday occurring. Many common symptoms of stress are regarded as routine ordinary responses. As a result, we fail to notice presence of stress. We do not think that a 'normal frequent discomfort' is a nebulous face of latent monstrous illness. We do not stretch our imagination that the recurrently occurring 'common cold' is pointing at stress, is indicative of our reduced resistance. Our general attitude toward it is – 'what is special about it, this common cold is a normal thing everyone gets it'; and you miss the reality. That is why stress is sometimes called 'hidden enemy', a 'veiled enemy', though there, its existence is not openly felt.

4.2 What are the markers of stress?

Stress normally does not create disease instantly. Truly speaking stress cautions us, gives us warning signals, which we frequently fail to cognize. The symptoms give us message stress tells us 'see, I am there, better you do something for me'. These symptoms or stress reactions portend us about endangered healthiness; if recognized well within time and dealt with properly they protect us from future loss - may be of health, money, social relations etc. Hence the key is, to identify signal symptoms of stress; we must be able to know that 'these are or these could be stress symptoms'.

It is certainly possible to identify such warning signs and, we can help ourselves reduce our stress experience well in time, we can control and get freed from possible serious consequences of stress and live healthy life. Indubitably we are able to do something about it. We can mobilize our - so far unexplored resources.

To know, stress is there in you, you can just test out the following enlisted symptoms. Not necessarily, you are experiencing or have experienced all at a time, but take a note - if you have most of them at a time or if you are suffering from many or any of them, time and again say – every fifteen days or a month or two; if they are lasting longer than usual, then you can presume that they are suggesting your 'stress condition'; Even if one or two (or more of them) are occurring periodically, without well-defined justifiable reason/s (or with reasons), and lasting perceptibly longer time then that too should be treated as indicative of stress; It should be taken as a memorandum from stress.

4.2.1 Signal Symptoms of Stress

- Dryness of mouth / throat.
- Tightening of Jaw or pain / pressure in jaw.
- Grinding of teeth (some people grind teeth in sleep also).
- Frequent, compelled effortful breathing, heavy breathing.
- Frequent hiccoughs or belching.
- Need to breathe short breaths repeatedly.
- Frequent yawning.
- Difficulty to breathe - long and deep lungful of air.
- Headache / tension headache.

- Recurring complaint of gases in abdomen, burning sensation in chest – sternum area.
- Repeated attacks of common colds.
- Repeat complaints of indigestion.
- Getting irritated without reason or for trivial reasons.
- Difficulty in concentration.
- Numbness of limbs

4.2.2 Significant Symptoms of Stress

- Indigestion – constipation.
- Increased pulse rate.
- Breathlessness, increased heart beats.
- Recurrent attacks of illness.
- Sleeplessness, difficulty in getting into sleep.
- Increased irritability in general.
- Persistent feeling of tiredness.
- Difficulty in concentrating, difficulty to sustain concentration/attention.
- Increase in drug/alcohol intake.
- Emotional/behavioural outbursts.
- Inner feeling of restlessness.
- General feeling of tiredness.

Any one of the above or in combination, if persists for more than fifteen days or occur repeatedly with a gap of a few days or a week or two weeks – may be regarded indicative of stress.

4.2.3 Resultant Symptoms of Stress

- Deliberate belatedness, increased absenteeism, and slowness.

- Tendency to direct attention to unimportant things.
- Becoming irritable or aggressive for miniscule reasons.
- Lack of concentration.
- Indecisiveness, difficulty in making proper judgment.
- Becoming illogical.
- Mechanically reading or doing same thing.
- Reduced zest.
- You are not 'yourself'.

4.2.4 Indirect Symptoms of Stress

- Becoming mean in nature, becoming dull and slow, blaming oneself, allowing one's mind to roam in a varied way.
- Unexplainable frustration,
- sad smile,
- feel like escaping to an unknown place,
- feel like hiding,
- bad dreams,
- indulging in asocial or antisocial behaviour,
- strong feeling of meaninglessness in life,
- shallow feeling,
- loss of interest and initiative,
- cold attitude,
- lack of interest in caring and sharing,
- waiting for miracles to happen,
- diminution of sex drive,

- easily bothered,
- finding difficulty in establishing close interpersonal relationship,
- inability to trust others,
- becoming more and more undisciplined,
- markedly more or less eating than before,
- sleep excessively less or more,
- feeling tired before long,
- pains and aches in various body parts,
- frequent micturition,
- tics in body parts,
- feeling helpless.

4.2.5 Other Noticeable Sudden Contradictory Changes

Sudden paradoxical changes in behaviour always commonly imply some stress. If such a transformation is seen in your friend or colleague or any known person - may be measured, as signal of stress, needs something to be done for immediately.

- Regular and punctual individual suddenly becoming irregular and tardy,

  sluggish,
- Careless casual person working hard,
- Miser individual spending money generously,
- Liberal person behaving stingy,
- Extravert social person preferring seclusion,
- Generally a loner individual mixing with people,

- Working Conditionally,
- Independent person leaning for company of others,
- Straightforward truthful person behaving dishonestly, deceiving unethically, conniving,
- Person otherwise voluntarily accept responsibilities now shunning away from duties.

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5

CHAPTER

Managing Stress: Part 1

- *Paradox of Stress*
- *Prerequisites of Managing Stress*
  - *Identifying presence of stress*
  - *Naming the stressor*
  - *Reflecting: (Q-Q-A formula)*
- *Concerning Strategies*
  - *Who is your first guide in stress resolution?*
- *General Ways To Reduce Stress*
  - *Additional Hints to Keep the Stress Away*
  - *Natural – In - Built Psychological Defense Reactions damage – repair mechanisms*
- *Reflect on this*
- *Subsidiary General Methods*

Having oriented briefly about the nature of stress and the process leading to stress related symptoms, let us acknowledge, what we can do to manage our stress.

It is said, if at all anything you want to control, then you should control your stress. Managing stress is easy in words but difficult to carry out. No doubt, it is not beyond your reach. Learning to keep stress at adequate level is a key that opens the door of wealth to your health, success in your career, and joy in your personal life.

Stress Management does not imply complete elimination of stress from life. It recognizes that no stress means absence of liveliness in life. Principally, it seeks for balance. It suggests, if there is (excessively) high stress - reduce it; if there is (excessively) low stress - increase it.

Technically stress management involves removing or attenuating excessive strain of stress so that one can get rid of undesirable effects of it on mind, and body, and spirit. There are number of ways by which we can handle our stress. Some ways help us get immediate relief from stress; a few others make us resistant against stress by way of increasing overall immunity against psychological (trauma) and physical (disease) distress.

Strategy X may reduce stress of Mr. Vinod effectively while Shri Shankar finds quick respite from troubling symptoms by strategy Y; where as Ms. Kiran may be benefited with a combination of both. Suresh relieves himself of his tension by resting head on a friend's shoulder; whereas Meena prefers to stay alone contemplating in a secluded room for sometime when stressed.

A particular technique may be more effective in reducing stress of some specific stressor but may not be equally effective in lessening stress of the other stressor.

A problem of financial crisis may be better solved by discussing it with and or taking help from a friend, while stress due to a loss of spouse, may be better handled by coming into terms with reality, accepting the inevitable fact with full affecting respect for the demised soul.

Some techniques are best suited when you are actually 'in stress' situation; some are more effective in relieving 'after experience – stress impact'; some others provide opportunity to guard you from stress; and still some others make you stress resistant.

Using a particular stress management technique or techniques is something like choosing a specific antibiotic for a particular kind of infection from among diverse antibiotics. We know that one particular antibiotic may have action against specific infection, the other is a broad-spectrum antibiotic and useful in treating variety of infections.

In tune with your individual basic nature, existing circumstances, and 'type' of a stressor, you may decide upon an effective strategy or a combination of strategies; or, you may prefer to develop equanimity of poise that equips you tackle variety of stressors effectively. You can pursue a strategy or strategies that best suits your natural world.

Important point that warrants attention is, whichever strategy you intend to employ, it calls for considerable practice to master it. To be able to use a stress relieving strategy or technique to ward off stress experience or stress effects. 'Sincere efforts' and 'will to adopt', have no substitute. Persistent practice is just the right thing to master the technique/s to employ it at will. There is no definite rule that can prescribe the doses of the technique, but to attain substantial mastery over the technique, you need to practice it honestly and regularly, at least for fifteen days to a month, roughly. Using a technique once or twice at random on a blue moon day, does not make it accessible for its instant and effective use; to be able to use it instantly and effectively. Unless and until it has not become your natural - habitual response, it will not guarantee a desired outcome. Continuity of practice makes the technique effectual.

Paradox of Stress

Interesting paradox related to stress behaviour is, many times, you love your stress, you like to remain stressed. That is your conventional Choice. 'Under stress' condition is advantageous for certain reasons. Miserableness attracts attention from other people. Your pseudo – ego is flattered. You enjoy this luxury. You don't want to come out of it. Continuing under stress exhausts energy, the energy you, otherwise would want to utilize in constructive behaviour. Whenever you continue to stick to your favourite stress response, you are compromising your health. So, at what cost you should embrace that stress behaviour that you have to decide. One thing is sure clinging to particular stress behaviour hampers your efforts to get rid of the stress. Any remedial measure will not, then, benefit you substantially.

Each of the coming three parts presents subtle ways to reduce stress or to keep stress away or resist and overcome the stress as a 'problem'. In the first part we shall first see certain *basic prerequisites of stress management strategies and techniques, and later, some general important – minor but vital* stratagems *to manage stress; and in the next two, some spiritually oriented and some stress resistant strategies.*

5.1 Prerequisites of Managing Stress

The First and foremost precondition of Managing Stress is, to have a genuine **'wish to live happy life'**.

The wish motivates you to make sincere efforts to get rid of undesirable stress effects. You need to have a true desire to live and lead happy and healthy life.

Keeping in mind, the nature of stress, management of stress, begins with identifying presence of stress in one's life. Unless you become aware of your stress, you will not exert yourself to do anything for it, to get rid of it. Your stress management truly speaking, should begin, rather begins, with your honest and earnest efforts to find out the fact, that, you are stressed. The question hovers over how to know stress is there in you, how to identify the presence of stress in you. The first step in stress management is to identify the existence of stress.

First Step

5.1.1 Identifying Presence of Stress

This can be done in a very simple manner. You may need barely 15 to 30 minutes. Do this simple exercise: Find a corner of your room on a quiet day and just ask - 'how are you?' put this question to yourself as a third person. Answer this question righteously and sincerely. Look at, and observe your answer carefully. Study, if you answer instantly - 'I am O.K., I am fine'; Well and Good! But, if your answer is 'I am not o.k.' or 'Umhh ...I think

I a…m o…k.' then, surely, it's a sign of alarm, indicative of mounting of stress, some kind of stress is there. In this case, though you have answered, 'I am o. k'. but, you are not really so. Notice the time, you took to answer and the way you have answered it. If you are '… taking time' or 'quite some time' to answer it; and if, your answer is dragged, with additional accompanied disturbing pauses, then, be sure, that you are harboring stress; some kind of distress is there. You need to do something about it.

How to know the Existence of Stress

Try this Exercise

Ask Q: How Are You?

Answer: 1. I am O.K. (Stress under manageable limits)

2. I am Not O.K. (Stress not easily under

3. Umh.. I think I am o.k. Manageable limits)

Second Step

5.1.2 Naming the Stressor

After identifying the presence of stress, next step is **to 'name' the stressor;** you have to point out what is causing stress. You can get a clue about this by doing another small exercise. You may require hardly fifteen to twenty minutes. You can do this:

Sit quiet for a while and watch your recurring thoughts. Observe, what were the thoughts you mostly recollected? What was that you mostly thought about? What happened when you tried to stop those thoughts or turn away from them? What was the percent of time you spent in thinking about it, of the total-time? Which thoughts haunted your mind despite your efforts to turn them down? 'They' may tell you what is the stress center; truly speaking, they do tell us very clearly, what the stressor is! The stressor may be inside you or outside you, identify, and 'name' it vividly.

Naming the Stressor

Exercise

Sit quiet for 15 or 30 minutes

Watch: Recurrent Thoughts

About: (?)

Third step

5.1.3 Reflecting (Q-Q-A formula)

Obviously, next, you would think, what to do, what shall I do, how to go about it. Apply Q – Q – A formula. It enables the individual to prepare to handle the stress. Try this –

Ask - 'what can I do'? Try to answer, and say – **'I shall do something about it'**. Decide and resolve. Remember, **'no stress is unmanageable'**. Only, it needs to **be hit upon by an appropriate plan.** ***Contemplate***, you can ***establish a self – dialogue***. Figure out concrete strategy that can suit you (your personality) and 'your capacities, and your resources'. **Look at the people who have trodden the way through similar crisis.** You will always find a few who have pulled themselves out off the adverse circumstances analogous to yours. This shows, **there is something, that can handle the stress experience, however much serious the stressor is;** And, **'this something' lies in 'the individual'.** After all, stress is a riposte written with alphabets of physiological reactions by the individual. Strategies could be person specific or situation specific or permutation of both. Factually speaking, stress is a message, a reminder, that something knotty is happening (or has happened), you require to attend to; it gestures at – 'there is a need to take some action'.

Q–Q-A Formula: Preparation

Q : Can I do anything for my stress?

Q : What can I do?

A : **Yes,** I can do something and handle my stress.

5.2 Concerning Strategies

Once you have conceded 'to handle your stress'. You have *'two' broad ways* at your disposal to deal with stress or stress experience, Viz. - you can either 1) **remove the stressor** that is creating stress, or, 2) **remove yourself** so that you do not have to face stress situation and in sequel– you do not experience stress you don't *feel* stress, you remain unaffected by its negative impact.

Principle

Out of sight out of mind

Seemingly, the easiest way to deal with stress is, to **remove the stressor or remove 'yourself'** from the stress situation. This may reduce your stress instantly; may be temporarily. Stimulus removal is definitely effective useful in some cases. You must have observed, many times during angry encounters, one of the partaker is physically removed from the scene.

Nevertheless, this - removing the stressor is not possible, or, may be possible but not advisable in all circumstances. For example, think of the situation in which your children - your child is a stressor; or, you parent is a stressor; or - your boss is a stressor. In these cases removal of the stressor may be possible (at times), but not feasible. Many a times, there are certain inevitable situations or events in your life, such as death of a loved one or personal losses in natural calamities, wherein riddance of self or circumstances, is impossible impracticable. In such situations, some different strategy or strategies are required. Instead of physically removing the stressor, you may wish to alter the stressor – you may want to *modify it, you may want – your son should change.*

Here again, is a difficulty; changing the situation or the circumstances or the other person is not an easy job; because, firstly, it is not under your direct control, and secondly, it is not viable in certain situations. For instance, you never had good relations with your boss; you don't expect improvement in near future. You can not quit the job either for, the whole family is monetarily dependent on your salary.

Appraising the whole, you would realize, it would be compararatively, easier to change yourself. You need to give a thought to the idea, 'can I do anything for myself? In reply to this question, a more valid statement would be, 'definitely, I can do something for my stress'! Rather, 'I have to do something for my stress, let me do something to get rid of my stress'! **Once you are stable on this declaration you may have number of choices.**

Principle

Thought is a *force*

(It has capacity to translate itself into action.)

5.2.1 Who is Your First Guide in Stress Resolution?

Your first guide in this respect is your stress itself.

'Your own stress' may provide you a clue.

First Guide is Stress

Make Stress 'Your Friend'

Listen, What, it is trying to tell you

Make your stress - your friend, and, Listen, 'what it wants to tell you'. Pay attention to - what it is trying *to convey*. Probably, it is soliciting some 'change', may be in your attitude or behavior, your reaction, or style of responding, or a habit. May be it is asking you, - *to read more, to learn something different, to invite cooperation from more people, to use less dominant style of working or simply to speed up or slow down, or to accept the reality as a matter of fact*. Listen carefully, recognize - realize, and push off.

Is Your Stress Asking For →

'Change' in attitude, behavior, reaction or habit? —

To learn something different,

To read more,

To invite cooperation from more people,

To use less dominant style of working or

To speed up or

To slow down or

To listen quietly or

To become more assertive or

To accept the reality

Health consequences or effects of stress depend upon how good you are at changing your outlook and actual behaviour. In a way, stress reaction is a function of your perception. It is psycho-biologically true, that, 'stress lies in the eye of the perceiver'. Effect of stress or stress experience is closely related to the subjective - cognitive appraisal of a stressor.

Following dealings may assist you in alleviating negative effects of stress. They may help you to be able to work in stress condition/s without being stressed harmfully. Let us glance, in this section, first, at measures that facilitate reduction of personal experiencing of stress when you are actually in stress situation, and then, general remedies to keep the stress away.

5.3 General Ways To Reduce Stress

Following tips may aid you in reducing your stress substantially - *when you are actually in stress situation*. They may appear unadorned, simple, too trivial - worth of total neglect, but, may really help you. You can employ one or more at a time or one by one, the way you find suitable.

Suppose, you are chided by your boss for certain fault of yours or may be, no fault; you are bubbling with anger; you have come out of boss's cabin irritated, or, you just had a quarrel with your friend or you are bombed with a sudden awesome news; you may settle on one or two or a few of the following →

- **Sip water slowly. Swallow, little by little. Do not gulp. Drink water sip by sip.***
- Sit still for a while.
- Take long breath or
- Short but deep breaths 2 – 3 times.
- Look out from window or door at a long distance.
- Close your eyes gather within and just ask what is disturbing me.
- Short exercise may aid in releasing your tension.
  - *Stretch your body/ body parts wherever you are.*
  - *Twist your body,*
  - *You can take a walk around the building of your office.*
  - *Cry - find a place where you can cry (you may use office bathroom even).*
  - *Go to a place where you can shout loudly / 'yell'.*
  - *Squeeze a hand gripper e.g., paper weight, ball, handle of the chair.*

(These things though appear petty but help you physiologically and also psychologically in restoring homeostasis; they help you ventilate your tension, and anger; they dilute sympathetic reaction. Small action of squeezing handle or ball, may provide satisfaction, to some extent, of symbolic strangulation of the boss's neck, a sense of retaliation – this may sound funny or unethical to many, nevertheless, contains some truth. They give you temporary respite and save you from undesirable up shoot of sympathetic activity. Tension is dissipated physiologically and psychologically. Do not forget, brain does have capacity not to differentiate between real and imagination).

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* (This helps in two ways, your attention is diverted and stress is diluted at least for the time being - in a limited sense, distress – a (negative) impact is reduced. Temporary respite is a psychological benefit. Plus, this also relieves you off physiological agitation; aids you restore homeostasis e.g., drinking water certainly reimburse comfort to the dryness of throat caused due to sympathetic activation.)

5.3.1 Additional Hints

- Set right your posture, otherwise also a habit of sitting with full and properly extended position minimizes bodily stress as well as mental. When one assumes twisted position pressure at various body parts is uneven one portion is excessively stretched the other is compressed. Though you have a feeling that you are relaxing in a coiled or tilted posture (this is especially true while watching T.V.) it is not true because unconsciously you are putting some organs or parts of your body under pressure and few others excessively stretched – both creating imbalance. Spine is under strain.
- Contemplate humour / construct humour; muse funny and pleasant thoughts. You can use this right in the office (or wherever you are). At the time of confronting scolding by boss or by other authority you may use imagery like imagining your boss in clown's gown or with words water of river is flowing down from the mouth of your boss etc. You can use positive imagery (see Box) to boost your mood.
- Share your experience/s with friend.

- Analyze your behaviour calmly. Ask, 'what is it that is upsetting me'?; 'Is my anger (or depression) justified?; 'What is my contribution to my anger or unhappy condition like this?'

Positive Imagery

Is a technique in which you mentally invoke image of something that conveys happiness, warmth, or peaceful feelings, for example you can ruminate a scene of -

- A Beach
- A Lake
- Floating on an air mattress
- Rising Sun
- Pleasant meeting with friend
- Any other positive image of your choice

Simple Tips to Keep the Stress Away

5.3.2 Use of Natural–In-built Psychological Defense Reactions* (Damage – Repair Mechanisms)

Have You Ever Thought of This?

Nature has blessed us with certain innate mechanisms or built in reaction-patterns that attenuate psychological shock. We rarely employ them and even if we ever employed them we do that often much against will or attach imprecise meaning to them or we simply hesitate to exploit them. They are good stress mitigaters. Have you ever used these Natural Psychological Defense Reactions, they are God gifted damage – repair mechanisms*? If not, act upon under stress when you really feel their need from within.

- **Crying, weeping:** Children frequently use this mechanism when they are hurt or frustrated. Adults are rarely seen crying. In adults 'crying behaviour' is admissible only when they are grieved due to a loss of some one. In fact, crying it out alleviates emotional tension.

  There are certain cultural sex related mistaken beliefs regarding 'crying behaviour'. In most cultures 'men's' crying, even in trying situation, is not considered a 'manly' gesture. It is often regarded as lady's privilege. Quite frequently, we encounter a remark especially for boys, "why are you crying like a girl?" or "you are not a girl you should not weep, you are a man, this doesn't suit you". Men's crying is not socially regarded as a sign of sound person's personality. In general, men are socially discouraged and kept deprived of this wonderful tension relieving mechanism. Interestingly, research study finding reflected different story; in one study, conducted on a sample of hosteller young adult boys – post graduates and post post-graduate students, it was found that nearly fifty percent of the boys did prefer weeping when they were in difficulty. Nevertheless, they chose to do it secretly (Dhengle & Khubalkar 2002).

- **Talking freely with someone /Talking it out:** This simple but powerful reaction pattern is generally ignored. The pangs or shock of trauma can be greatly smoothened by talking it off. Traumatized person is in need of sharing the burden of overpowering load of emotions. Talking freely about it someone, telling it, describing it to other people repetitively reduces tension desensitizes the person to accept the experience as something in the past and help maintain integrity into oneself. Through verbal ventilation extent of extra tension is released.

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* (Note: a) Good account of these has been given by Colman (1984) in his book 'Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life'.
b) In-built Defense Mechanism Inventory – see Appendix - A)

- **Taking support from others/Seeking Support:** Many times many people find undervalued if they sought support from others. That is an insult to their 'independent personality'. In this respect children can be followed. Children often hold the mother's or elderly person's hand tightly, may put their arms around the neck or they just shut themselves up in the embrace and find protection till they recoup. Simple gesture of resting head on other person's shoulder or shaking hand may relieve you off of pressing emotions.
- **Laughing at / Use of Humour:** One can surely free oneself by laughing at one's failure or setbacks in life. Looking at disappointments with a sense of humour alleviates emotional distress; also provides alternative angle to assess situation and person(s) involved.
- **Dreaming:** Dreams may act as desensitizing agent in case of traumatic experience or severe stresses of natural calamities disasters and accidents such as earthquake, flood, plane crash, riots etc. Repetitive dreams or nightmares help relieve individual the impact of the event and preserve the integrity, save further dent.

- **Introspection:** Turning toward oneself self - appraisal: ask yourself 'what is it that has really upset me'.

In – Built Defense Reactions

- Crying, weeping
- Taking support from others
- Humourous
- Talking freely with someone
- Introspection: Turning Inside
- Dreaming

5.4 Reflect on This

In general, it has been found that *certain observances, if pursued, act as catalytic agent, lend a hand in keeping stress away.*

- **Habit of Reading humorous literature, Being in Company of humorous people:** Reading humourous literature, watching comedy TV serials or programmes may give respite from gloom. It is possible to learn to laugh at things, events, and reactions, practically anything. Cutting jokes, listening to jokes, reading jokes definitely reduces intensity of your suffering. You can pick up lighter moments virtually from anything from any serious moment and movement. If it is not 'in you' you can learn to cultivate practice of 'seeing' funny side of an event.
- **Planning:** Planning is a good stress innoculant agent, planning saves from embarrassment, humiliation, inferiority, shame, self-pity, and

frustration hostility towards self. *Plan your day plan your work* – preferably in the morning while taking tea; Jot down the tasks to be completed in a day, can also plan for a week. You hardly need five or ten minutes. Plan the whole day, roughly plan when you will be leaving home for office, when and with whom you will be taking your lunch, what will be the day's target of work, how you will be returning back home, how you will be spending your evening. Also plan and be prepared if some planned goals are blasted.

- **Planning of Time - Time Management:** Plan the task giving adequate time for completion; count time for every minor detail. If you judge you can complete the task in one hour then plan it for one and half hours; if you feel you can finish the task within three hours set the time limit for four hours. This saves you from variety of stressors. Likelihood of completion of the task within time limit is High which promotes confidence, a sense of fulfillment; you do not have to face shame or failure; relief from Zeigarnik effect (effect of incomplete task); saves lot of wastage of energy, errors of haphazard working.

If you are routinely scolded for reaching fifteen minutes late in office, *decide, determine and settle down on to leave home 20 minutes earlier your usual time.* Pat yourself on reaching before time, be glad; be proud of being punctual.

Plan your 'Day' - decide daily priorities and plan your time accordingly. Do not allow mixing of priorities. When there are multiple responsibilities to be completed, it is better to attempt **'one by one'**, follow a rule *'one at a time'*.

Time Management

Reality: You cannot manipulate Time

You have to learn to manage yourself according to available time you have at your disposal.

Management of Time: **Set Priorities**

Follow the rule: Simple –few tasks → can attempt simultaneously

Multiple Complex Tasks: **One at a time**

One by One

Planning of expenditure - Money Management; avoid unnecessary expenditure, if you have limited income let your expenses be need based.

(Suggestion – Plan expenses on priority basis, fulfill one by one)

(You can prepare hierarchy of priorities)

Planning of speech - Speech management: Plan your words/ speech e.g., if you are to conduct a meeting you need to plan your words sentences choice of words sentences, pressure on words, 'emotion' you would prefer with word/s, style of delivery – pauses, nuances, timing – situation, positioning of words/ sentences, selection of persons with whom you will be interacting mostly in the meeting; *Planning of listening behaviour patterns.* Pre-conceive the effect(s) / reaction(s) of your words pauses and be prepared to handle the reactions.

Also plan your speech your emotions - words and sentences emotions attached to words while interacting with people at home.

(Suggestion – Balance between number of words (or sentences to be spoken) and time, and the kind of 'person' whom you are interacting with. Always remember words are not mere alphabets they carry meaning intensions and therefore pregnant with desired and undesired reactions.)

(Follow desirable listening behaviours while interacting with other people)*

- **Helping others,** do not shun away from volunteering altruism (It is a common experience that a simple genuine helpful act (e.g., helping an old man to cross a busy road) enhances subjective feeling of contentment, makes you feel 'good' from within).
- **Club Membership** - Keep yourself attached with some organization besides job. Accept membership of some formal or informal group of your inclination. Pursue your hobbies, interests.
- **Cultivate Friendship** - Even if you are a loner let there be a few or at least one friend. If you have difficulty in maintaining friendship try this – whenever you meet your friend, meet as if you are meeting him/her for the first time with respect, dignity and compassion. (This is relevant even with other acquaintances.)
- **Fine – tune Eating Behaviour** - Eat, at least once in a day with family members; if your job requirement

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* Desiable Lisening (attentive) Behaviours (SOLER)
S = Sit squarely; O = Open stance; L = leaning forward; E = Eye Contact; R = relaxed.
Undesirable – non-attentive Behaviours: opposite of the above i.e., not sitting straight, not open- hands/legs crossed; no eye contact; restrained posture. (Source: Egan, 1990).

- **Learning** - Always remember every experience teaches you something, ponder and try to gather what can be learned from it. Every experience is a learning experience. Every experience is an opportunity to learn something. Acquire and practice what is to be done and what is not to be done.

Attitude toward Stress

A (pressing) *challenge*

OR

A *chance* (to prove your 'self')

5.5 Subsidiary General Methods

- **Adopt Good dietary practices:** Good dietary practice could be a challenging issue. One can follow a general rule in this respect – **eat only when you are hungry,** you can develop a fixed ratio schedule in terms of amount of food and timing. Do not overindulge do not frustrate with preferred food. Stop when thought strikes you 'this morsel is extra'. Never eat to the point that induces burden of continuous feeling of fullness of tummy. (Remember commonsense saying, "eat your breakfast like a king, take your lunch like a knight, and have dinner like a beggar" - this may keep you fit all the time.). If you have faith, develop the practice to offer food you are taking to the divine existence in you. Eat every morsel with full consciousness; eat every mouthful with peace.
- **Optimism:** Cultivate optimistic attitude towards life. Optimistic outlook toward future boosts personal

control over one's life. You can convert your stress into your strength. In reality you always have control on your life; you can end it willfully any time, similarly you can live your life electively. Why not to try the option 'can I convert this calamity into opportunity'. From every experience one can learn something positive, ponder can I learn anything from this; does any aspect of my personality grow out of it. Carefully listen to your experience what it wants to tell you. Technically speaking positive attitudes and ways of thinking are found associated with more positive emotions and better health even in face of actual stress.

- **Learn how to do things:** Before embarking upon, learn how to complete how to do the task. Learn, even apparently non-conspicuous small things before performing, study and practice how to do a thing, how to execute. That saves you from mistakes and consequent frustration (of failure and ridicule). You have to learn even, how to sleep, how to get up, how to eat, toward which we hardly pay attention. You may consider the following.
    - **How to sleep?** → Sleep is necessary for the body, just as the body needs food. Take sufficient sleep, no less, no excessive sleep. Though there are variations in required sleep hours the normal average hours are 7 to 8 hours. Do not lump just like that. Lying down comfortably, relax and concentrate with eyes closed with a specific will and aspiration before you enter into the sleep proper. Good to follow a customary practice to

do a prayer before going to bed. Do a conscious prayer and concentrate on the divine aspect. If necessary, sit for some time, make prayer sincerely, concentrate, and then lie down still keeping the concentration. Do not forget to relax.

- **How to get up?** → Do not get up abruptly. Concentrate for a few moments, if you are spiritually oriented offer the day to the Divine calling the Mother's – (Adi Shakti) presence for the day and aspire for the concentrated attitude throughout the day's working. (Sri Aurobindo, 1995, LoY, p. 1482; The Mother, 2004).
- **How to eat?** → Eat consciously your food. Take good, hygienic, clean food. Eat your food with grace without greed. Do not ravage. There is a custom in many cultures to offer prayer before taking in food. If you are not averse there is no harm if you consciously regard the food. Eat always with peace and respect for food in mind.

(Note: Even after attempting all these, and yet, if you are still not relieved of feeling of unbearable stress, *seek expert's guidance: consult a psychiatrist or a psychologist*. There should absolutely be no hitch in consulting experts in the field when you face continual difficulty that is not getting solved with personal efforts. This consultation is like – when you suffer from fever, you may control it first, by consuming common drugs such as crocin or Anacin, however, if your fever persists for longer duration, you may, non-

hesitantly seek physician's help or doctor's – expert's advice; similarly, it is suitable to work for one's own stress but, if the problem persists for objectionably long period, then, there is no harm in soliciting counsellor's / psychologist's / psychiatrist's help. Expertise can be definitely trusted.)

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6

CHAPTER

Managing Stress: Part 2

- *Spiritually based (Psycho –Spiritual) remedies of various Problems*
- *Alternative Special Methods Spiritual ways to manage stress reactions*
- *Managing Anger, Persistent Habit, Anxiety, Despondency, Strain, Desire, Fear.*
    - ❖ *Will to Change*
    - ❖ *Reason out*
    - ❖ *Replacement of lower emotions by higher emotions or states*
- *A Few More Spiritually based remedies for Some Specific Problems*
    - ❖ *To get rid of wrong movements (anger, fear etc.)*
    - ❖ *With Regard to Defects and Imperfections*
    - ❖ *Regarding Difficulties*
    - ❖ *Regarding Defects*

How to detach

- *About Suicide or Suicidal Thoughts and Despair*
- *In difficulty or Unusual Experience*
    - *Spiritual Self – Dialogue*
- *In crisis*
    - *Spiritual Rationalization*
- *Tips to remember*

6.1 Spiritually based (Psycho–Spiritual) Remedies of Various Problems

The means glimpsed in earlier subsections are generally helpful to majority normal people. There are certain other ways and thinking that are seemingly more fitting to spiritually oriented people. They are employed to mitigate spiritual stress some people experience. However, they may be functionally useful to common people too, especially to those who have covert or overt spiritual leaning. They are fundamentally of aid to transforming human nature (from ordinary human mind to higher consciousness); are valuable in conquering adverse emotions and reactions and consequences thereof of human nature; and in the course subsequently influence normal disturbing actions and reactions. They situate on 'Spirituality base'.

Before embarking upon using them let us recognize the position of spirituality so that they can be consciously used for maximum benefit.

Spirituality holds

> *Basic assumption* – Divine Exists, There is something that can be identified as "Truth", "Infinity". Spirituality believes in the 'Divine',

'Higher Force Forces', 'Higher Experiences', 'Higher Truth/s', and Higher - Levels of Consciousness'.

Spirituality recognizes existence of higher forces their working and their influences on human beings human behaviour. It takes cognizance of higher realities and truths and higher states. At higher consciousness levels emotions and instincts of ordinary life do not remain as they are; forms and nature of truths or realities at higher level/s are different (Sri Aurobindo, LoY, 1970, pp. 235, 258). At higher levels of consciousness dualities of ordinary emotions such as joy and grief, pain and happiness loose their usual sense and a kind of equanimity is introduced. By raising the level of consciousness one is automatically free of negative emotions of ordinary life consciousness. This can be achieved by double movement - ascent and descent of consciousness i.e., either by ascending into the higher level or by calling down (descent) the higher consciousness or force into the individual. The best may be attainable by simultaneous movements of ascent of the individual and the descent of the higher consciousness. No doubt, this is not easy, but at the same time, not impossible and or impracticable.

Like any other science, spirituality prescribes precise systematic methods to be followed to reach the specific result or outcome. Just as, by using psychological intervention, desired changes can be brought about, so also, by higher - intervention, certain changes can be brought out. Perhaps, the same can be achieved in a better way in most instances. These interventions can be called 'greater psychological interventions' or simply 'higher interventions' or 'superventions'. They assist you access higher consciousness/ess.

In general, the strategies that alter level of consciousness especially which raise the level of consciousness or rework thought system and cognition are precious stress management techniques.

Meditation is one of the ways that helps you raise your level of consciousness; can induce variety of diverse and or higher level experiences and emotions such as quietude, peace etc. Meditation is now a well - recognized effective self - regulating strategy employed to overcome stress consequences of various factors. Meditation is not merely a relaxation producing strategy but conscious dynamic meditation may lead you on the path of integral transformation of your nature.

Research evidence has documented enough support in favour of effectiveness of these techniques on health through their action on immune system. Individual's immune system is noticeably affected by emotional states a person is going through and the health and capacity to fight illness or illnesses is greatly influenced by functioning of the immune system. The following paragraphs note some research results that depict relationship between various emotional states and experiences; and cognize certain psycho-spiritual ways and methods of reconstruction of self, life experiences and cognition.

Research Evidence

Studies related to negative experiences and their effects

Many research studies showed that negative experiences and emotions adversely affect your health. Hostility, anger, depression, low self esteem are found associated with heart attacks (Mittleman *et al.*, 1995;

McCabe *et al.*, 2000; Williams *et al.*, 2000), depression in general is associated with reduction in immune system activity (Petitto *et al.*, 1992). Other studies have indicated noisy environment chronic noise may cause generalized cognitive deficit in children (Cohen *et al.*, 1986); Workplace trauma – sudden loss of job, corporate downsizings have crushing effect on self esteem (Newstrom & Davis, 2004, p. 368); Witnessing workplace violence, repeated workplace violence emerged to lead to PTSD - post traumatic stress disorder (Greengard, 1999). Death of spouse has been found related with decrease in natural killer cell activity (Irwin *et al.*, 1987). Effects of separation, divorce, lack of social support, and loneliness, are seen associated with immune system impairments (Kiekolt – Glasser & Glasser, 1992).

Daily irritations - hassles are seen connected with experience of dissatisfaction and such health problems as flu, sore throat, and backaches (Chamberlain & Zika, 1990; Roberts, 1995).

Studies related to positive experiences and their effects

Ordinary uplifting events, such as relating well with spouse or lover, with friends, completing task, feeling healthy, getting sleep, visiting, phoning, or writing letters, spending time with family eating out affect better side of psychological health (Kanner *et al.*, 1981). Emotional support from friends while facing stressor has healthier impact on functioning of immune system (Jemmott & Magloire, 1988). Even anonymous disclosure of stress and trauma has been found associated with enhanced immune functioning and better health consequence (Greenberg & Stone, 1992; Pennebaker *et al.*, 1988). Integral meditation on peace has shown to boost immune system, it increased

TLC -Total Leukocyte Count i.e. various white blood cells count (Khubalkar, 2002; 2004a). The altered immune reactivity was seen as happening of amalgamation of peace - peace force and or in response to altered state of consciousness demonstrated by higher level experiences such as a feeling of 'very much calm and peace and silence', 'as though in void', 'not able to think wrong about anything', 'can see my goal clearly' etc. Others have also made similar type of observation (e.g., Smith, Compton, & West, 1995; Khubalkar, 2004b, 2006). Meditation was found associated with subjective experiences like feeling happier, less anxious, less depressed, calm and relaxed, self at peace, increased self confidence, overall stability, less or no tension, less state-trait anxiety, etc. Meditators are often found reporting apart from significant reduction in general anxiety, decrease in high blood pressure, and insomnia (Corrington, 1986; Eppley, Abrams, & Shear, 1989; Smith, 1975).

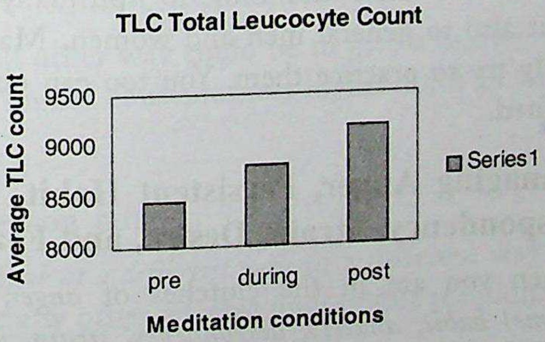

Figure: White Blood Cells – Total Leukocyte Count Significantly increased due to meditation. (Khubalkar, 2004)

6.2 Alternative Special – Spiritual Ways to Manage Stress

Presence of Stress means a 'call to change'. A requisite change may be in fixed habits, automatic movements mechanical repetitions of the nature, involuntary reactions to life or life situations in general.

We have already scanned a few usual and unusual methods that may help us bring about changes in our movements or behaviour. Now let us look over some spiritually based ways and means to assist ourselves to handle negative emotions and difficulties.

Indeed, one can deal with any kind of excesses / or gratuitous negative emotions, feelings aspects of stresses by observing certain ways that can be called 'psycho - spiritual', are described below. They are by and large quotes from Sri Aurobindo's writings. They are basically remedies regularly practiced by many disciples to overcome negative emotions like anger, anxiety, depression suicide etc. They are of great assistance not only to spiritually disposed people but also to general men and women. Many openly or furtively try to practice them. You too can observe and get benefited.

6.3 Managing Anger, Persistent Habit, Anxiety, Despondency, Strain, Desire, and Fear etc.

When you are in the clutches of *anger, persistent (troublesome) habit, anxiety, despondency, strain, desire, fear* etc. For modification and to get rid of such negative reactions —

Have a sincere and honest wish to change your behaviour say 'anger' or 'anxiety', have full faith that the change you desire, will occur, let this faith in change be strong, let it get translated in actual behaviour. With complete faith and efforts call the higher Divine force to intervene allow it to work in you. You may contemplate and proceed this way –

1. →

6.3.1 Have a *Will to Change*

— The most important first and foremost is to have a will to change and alter a behaviour.

— Have faith in change, result, and ultimate outcome,

— Have Clear perception that these things (e.g., anger, sadness etc.) must go.

— One can conquer them by force of will plus mental plus or spiritual control.

Let your will (to change) be more obstinate **than your habit.**

— The other easier way is to realize the divine or enter into higher consciousness.

— Still other way could be to give a call for the descent of higher consciousness higher force in you.

2. →

6.3.2 Reason out

Think of a different logic or a different way to alleviate anger or any other adverse undesirable reaction:

Common notion about the emotion anger (or any impulse for that matter) is: - 'to give expression to anger or an impulse is the best way or the only way to get rid of it…'

(You can replace the above with —

Other substitute view: Expression to anger (for that matter any adverse/negative emotion) – prolong and confirm the habit of recurrence of anger (or any other emotion) because such expression signifies that you have accepted this expression as 'your way' so, 'taking it as your own method gives it a kind of sanction to be there'.

Embracing the above outlook, you can, in addition, try out the following options: →

— Refuse all expression to it /them in act or speech.

(Think, you always have the will and power to refuse admission to a wrong impulse or movement – *in reality you do have*).

— Do not take them as your own.

(If you feel them as not your own, then they have no right and the will can develop more power to send them away.

— Keep the contact with Divine Mother and her light, force, and accept only what comes from higher force.

— Look at it, — see how trifling is the occasion of the rising of this anger (or other negative impulse) and its outbursts....as if someone else who had the anger.

— Draw back from the outer things and take your stand in inner self.... Detach from all these things and people....live in inner quietude being.

— Try always to stand back in an inner quietude and if they come let them pass away like a cloud across the light.

(The most important, further he suggests – not to be discouraged by recurrences and persistences, have faith;

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they definitely can be overcome by force of will and higher intervention).

(Call Infinite peace, Universal love. (Infinite peace, Universal love can remove anger – if they are complete and stable [Sri Aurobindo, 1995, LoY, p. 1411).

(One has to make a strict rule *not to act according to the impulses* of anger, ego, or whatever the weakness may be that one wants to get rid of.)

or

If one does act in the heat of the moment, do not justify or persist in the action.

If one does that, (we find) after a time the difficulty abates or is confined purely to a subjective movement which one can observe, detach oneself from and combat. (Sri Aurobindo, 1995, LoY, p. 1708)

3. →

6.3.3 Replacement of lower emotions by higher emotions or states

If you could enter into higher level of consciousness and experience higher occurrences you will be experiencing higher states of emotions and higher emotions like *peace, stillness, beauty, health, energy strength -power, harmony etc.* Because they are the realities of those (higher) levels you are automatically free from lower emotions. They have positive effect on 'you' psychologically and physiologically.

Rationale

Just as negative experiences influence adversely the psycho-physiology of the individual higher superlative experiences influence psycho-physiology in superior manner.

Just as we invite lower emotions – e.g., anger, anxiety, worry etc., so also we can invite higher emotions such as quietude peace etc., into the physical. Negative experiences lead to impairment of immune function; positive and higher experiences lead to boost immune function.

If Negative experiences===lead to===Poor health,
Positive experiences ===lead to===Better health; then
Superlative (Higher) experiences===lead to===
Superior health

You can wish and attempt to replace your lower emotions with higher emotions or higher states. Meditation is one of the ways to have an access to the higher states of consciousness.

Remedy

> Begin by going for positive experience, by bringing down something of divine nature, calm, light, equanimity, purity, divine strength into the conscious being (part) that have to be changed.
>
> (Sri Aurobindo, 1995 – LoY: p. 1608)

Act through peace.

6.4 A Few More Spiritually based Remedies for Some Specific Problems

6.4.1 To get Rid of Anger, Anxiety, Fear etc.

While Dealing with Wrong Movements (anger, anxiety, fear etc.) and Difficulties

* First, Become conscious of the difficulties

* Detach yourself from them

- Do not identify with them
- Do not admit them any longer as part of your real nature but look on them as things imposed, and Reject them. (Sri Aurobindo, 1995, LoY, p. 1687).

Keep the will there

to separate and

to be free

to get rid of the imperfections from the surface nature

keep that will

Call the divine force, mother's force (Aadi Shakti) to aid to get rid of these things.

How to Detach?

You can say, "This is not I or Mine, — this is a thing I reject altogether".

Believe, "there is a part of the being inside which is not identified with wrong movements, which remains firm and says, "This may give trouble on the surface, but it will not touch me".

Contemplate, wish, and act accordingly decisively.

6.4.2 With Regard to Defects – Imperfection, Doubt etc.

'... But do not be always thinking of your defects and wrong movements#.

'It is necessary to observe and know the wrong movements in you; for they are the source of your trouble and (hence) have to be persistently rejected if you are to be free'. Do not be sorrowful or discouraged or fear anything but look steadily at all that comes out and have the will that it should go completely forever (Sri Aurobindo, 1995, LoY, p. 1690).

'Concentrate more upon what you are to be, on the ideal, with the faith that, since it is the goal before you, it must and will come.'

'Faith, cheerfulness, confidence in the ultimate victory are the things that help, — they make the progress easier and swifter.'

'... Turn your eyes more to the coming light and less to any immediate darkness.

(Sri Aurobindo, 1995, LoY, p. 1687)

Imperfection

"....If the imperfection is there, one has to see it.

The thing to be done is to live in the inner self and from there see the imperfection and change it."

Note: *"The defects should be noticed and rejected, but the concentration should be positive – on what you are to be, i.e., on the development of the new consciousness rather than on this negative side." (Sri Aurobindo, 1995, LoY, p. 1687 - 88).*

# *'It is necessary to observe and know the wrong movements in you; for they are the source of your trouble and (hence) have to be persistently rejected if you are to be free'.*

Do not be sorrowful or discouraged or fear anything but look steadily at all that comes out and have the will that it should go completely forever (Sri Aurobindo, 1995, LoY, p.1694).

6.4.3 Regarding Difficulties

"... refuse to be preoccupied with the idea of your difficulties

"...concentrate on really helpful and positive things.

" ... be cheerful and confident.

"Doubt and desire & Co. are there, no doubt, but the Divine is there also inside in you. Open your eyes and look till veil is rent and you see Him or Her."

(Sri Aurobindo, 1995, *LoY, p. 1688).*

"Not to be touched or disturbed by the difficulties, to feel separate from them is the first step towards freedom"

He suggests → Do not make a mistake of identifying yourself with difficulties and wrong movements "*Do not regard them as part of your own nature.*

→ ".. regard them as movements of universal lower imperfect and impure nature, forces that enter into you and try to make you their instrument for their self expression.

→ "Rather draw back from them, detach and dissociate yourself from them,

→ "By so standing back it is easier to find a quiet poise in yourself, ... from which you can more effectively call in the help... The Divine presence, calm, peace, purity, force, light, joy, wideness - are above waiting to descend in You.

→ "...through the quiet mind you can call down the descent first of the purity and peace and then of the Divine Force.... Once that is done, all the rest will be a question of time..."

(Sri Aurobindo, 1995, LoY, p. 1692)

Note: "... if you stress difficulties .... the difficulties tend to stick or even increase; on the contrary, if you put your whole stress on faith and aspiration and concentrate steadily on what you aspire to, that will sooner or later tend towards realization. *It is this change of stress, a change in the poise and attitude of the mind* that will be the more helpful process.

(Drawing back and becoming separate from wrong movements help in bringing change in perception, as a result, rejection of these things becomes easier and swifter. The movements (wrong movements) do not appear as belonging to yourself, this in turn help you perceive them as surface impositions of the outside forces. They (wrong movements) can be more easily discarded or brought to nothing. (Sri Aurobindo, 1995, *LoY, p. 16)*

(A resolute and persistent effort of 'will' can enforce the rejection. (Sri Aurobindo, 1995, *LoY, p. 1539). And desired change can be brought out.*

6.5 About Suicide or Suicidal thoughts and Despair

The realization of Sri Aurobindo regarding suicide, which he penned down to his disciples, may be of great assistance to combat with suicidal thought/s and despair.

"Despair is absurd and talk of suicide quite out of place. However a man may stumble, the Divine Grace will be there so long as he aspires for it and in the end lead him through.

"Suicide is an absurd solution; he is quite mistaken in thinking that it will give him peace. He will only carry his difficulties with him into a more miserable condition of existence beyond and bring them back to another life on earth. The only remedy is to shake off these morbid ideas and face life with a clear will for some definite work to be done as the life's aim and with a quiet and active courage.

"….. When the body drops, the soul goes wandering in other worlds – and finally it comes back to another life and another body. Then all the difficulties it had not solved meet again in the new life. So what is the use of leaving the body?

"Moreover, if one throws away the body willfully, one suffers much in the other worlds and when one is born again, it is in worse, not in better conditions. The only sensible thing is to face the difficulties in this life and this body and conquer them.

"*The way to succeed is to refuse to be discouraged,* to aspire simply and sincerely so that the Mother's force may work in you and bring down what is above. ……"

(Sri Aurobindo, 1995, LoY, pp. 1699 - 1700)

6.6 In Difficulty or Unusual Experience

To reduce negative impact of unexpected astonishing experience/s you can establish a spiritual dialogue.

One can say

> 'that was a queer go, the Divine seems in a queer mood and if that is his way of doing things, it must be the right one; I am surely a still queerer fellow myself and that, I suppose, was the only means of putting me right.' 'That was the only way to make me understand.'

6.7 In Crisis

Hold firm with the faith in Divine, reject all contrary suggestions and wait till the crisis is completed; it is not the decisive and definite truth. "There is only one truth in you on which you have to lay constant hold, the truth of your divine possibilities and call of the higher Light to your nature. If you hold to that always, or, even if you are momentarily shaken from your hold, return constantly to it, it will justify itself in the end in spite of all difficulties and obstacles and stumblings."

6.7.1 Spiritual Rationalization

If Divine has sent me on this earth then whatever happens must be for my growth. My job is to complete assigned work as perfectly as I can. If I am a child of the divine then my life is a responsibility of the Divine, why bother. Let the Divine Will Prevail. Ultimately the energy the force required for or that is present in me is a part of universal energy let me trust the divine presence in me. Keep faith - Just Surrender, offer to the Divine and, act and relieve.

6.8 Tips to Remember

"To be observing faults and worry movements brings depression and discourages faith.

".. too continual an emphasis on the dark side of things (imperfections, difficulties) increases the force of the difficulties, gives greater right of continuance to the imperfections. (p. 1686).

"Make more of the *good experiences* that come to you; one experience of the kind is *more important than the lapses and failures.* When it ceases, do not repine or allow yourself to be discouraged, but be quiet within and aspire for its renewal in a stronger form leading to a still deeper and further experience.

"Aspire always, but with more quietude, opening yourself to the Divine simply and wholly. (p. 1686).

"It is always better to dwell on the good side of things within yourself – not in an egoistic way, but with faith and cheerful confidence,..." (p. 1688)

"It is always better to dwell on calling down the positive experience of which the nature is already capable.

"Always *seek to progress in quietude*, happiness and confidence, that is the most helpful attitude." (p. 1686).

".... Constant *positive growth can help in the rejection* of all that has to be rejected". (Sri Aurobindo, 1995, LoY, p. 1688).

(The author has added emphasis by giving titles, or by underlining, or by introducing breaks at some places while quoting Sri Aurobindo's writings.)

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7

CHAPTER

Managing Stress: Part 3

- *Important Stress Resistant Strategies*
- *Regular Exercise /Asana*
- *Relaxation:*
  - ❖ *Immediate relaxation*
  - ❖ *Short Relaxation Methods of Different kind*
    - * *A] Gathered Quiet sitting*
    - * *B] Deep Breathing*
    - * *C] Abdominal Breathing*
  - ❖ *Relaxation using T – R (Tension – Relaxation) Method*
  - ❖ *The Whole Body Short Relaxation with T- R Method*
  - ❖ *Short Holistic Relaxation*
- *Meditation*
  - ❖ *Basics of Meditation*
  - ❖ *Integral Meditation on peace*

  - *How to enhance inner peace*
  - *Facilitatory Conditions for Meditation*
- *Introspection*
- *Disciplining Thoughts, Emotions, Overt Response*
  - *Self – Analysis Self – Questioning*
- *Insightful appraisal of Personality*
- *Cognitive Rehearsal Technique*
  - *RET / REBT Approach*
- *Some General Tips*

7.1 Important Stress Resistant Strategies

In facing the challenge of managing stress in modern world a need of healthier living is most significant. Because, you can not steer clear of stresses of life. You need to bring about basic change toward harmonious life to develop holistically integrally.

In addition to the ways and remedies described in previous two chapters, here is a depiction of important stress resistant strategies that facilitate harmonious life – within and manifest out. These strategies prevent you from stress. They make you more stable and able to resist stress psychologically as well as physically. They assist in reducing undesirable impact of stress. Various methods supplement one another. It may be noted that one can implement these techniques or methods appraising their effectiveness individually.

The strategies discussed here are:

- Regular Exercise / Asana
- Relaxation

- Meditation
- Introspection – Self Analysis
- Insightful appraisal of Personality
- RET - Rational Emotive therapy - Approach

7.2 Regular Exercise / *Asana - Yogasana*

Habit to do exercise or Asana regularly, keeps your body and mind fit; helps you open to receive and revive vital energy or energies of the universe. If it is not possible for you to do strenuous exercises or complicated asanas, it is better to form a habit to go for morning and or evening walk devotedly. Fit body always assists you to fight diseases as well as maintain health. Fit body and open mind are good instruments more able apparatuses for receiving higher - greater forces of the universe. For absorbing and assimilating greater strength and higher power, container (the body) too, needs to be better and perfect.

Let us briefly brush up our knowledge regarding *exercise and asana or yogasana.*

7.2.1 Exercise - Asana / Yogasana

We commonly refer exercise or asana to an activity undertaken to keep body and mind active and sound. These two terms are commonly used as equivalents. However, there is a difference between the two. **Exercise** is bodily or mental exertion for the sake of training or improvement. It is an action or operation performed or done to train or improve body's efficiency. The action may be repeated mechanically for sometime. In exercise, exertion is a desired outcome. Exercises are performed speedily fast and often repetitively.

Traditionally, Asana is any position of the body which should contribute to the steadiness of the mind and body and spirit leading to a sense of well being. Asana is assumed gradually fixing in it the whole consciousness. They are consciously modified postures assumed in 'three' basic human states – sitting, standing, and lying. They fundamentally involve three basic actions 1] turning, 2] bending, and 3] lifting - stretching.

Yogasana, fundamentally is a single unit of mind - body - spirit integral. Yogasanas are specific body posture patterns assumed to facilitate purification of physical and mental and spiritual consciousness aimed at more fulfilling life. They demand physical and mental discipline.

'Yoga' is originally a Sanskrit word, comes from the root word 'Yuj', which means 'to join' or 'to unite'. Its main aim is to unite with the Divine. Yogasanas or commonly called simply asanas demand joint working of mind and body consciousness. Most asanas re-condition the body and mind and spirit complex more suitable for further superior yogic practices such as meditation, samadhi etc. Every yogasana has its specific purpose. Each yogasana is a methodical effort towards self-improvement self – perfection. Each yogasana is aimed at improving healthy functioning of specific organ – heart, lung, eyes etc. It inherently aims at balance, harmony. Modern scientists and professionals consider yogasanas as facilitator or restorer of health.

Most asanas are based on postures of animals (e.g., Makarasan – Makar means crocodile), symbols like tree (e.g., Tadasan – Tad means tree), bow (Dhanurasan – Dhanur means bow), and lotus (Padmasan - padma means lotus).

Three basic aspects of asana, described in Patanjali Yoga Sutra (PYS) explain their dynamic effect on health.

1. स्थिरसुखमासनम् (PYS: II: 46) (Sthir / sukham / asanam → sthir means stable; sukham means comfort asana means posture). Asana is that which provides stability and comfort.
2. प्रयत्नशैथिल्यानंतसमापत्तिभ्याम् (PYS: II: 47) (Prayatna / shaithilya / ananta / samapattibbhyam) – Asana is that which makes possible contemplation on Infinity with minimum efforts or relaxed effort).
3. ततोद्वद्वानभिघातः (PYS: II: 48) (Tatodandwanbhighatah) Asana diminishes duality – Ultimate outcome of asana is complete co-ordination between two opposites, smooth harmony balance between reciprocals. From health perspective we can talk about coordinated functioning between sympathetic and parasympathetic functions, between mind and body.

If you are a regular performer, well and good, if not, better Join Yoga Kendra or gym or do simple exercises on your own, or buy a book on exercise or yogasana; and if you feel necessary, consult an appropriate trainer or yoga teacher. Simple exercises or asanas can be very well done individually. To learn properly, to master simple exercises or asanas, it hardly takes a month or two. Perform daily or at least three to four (3 – 4) times a week.

There is a kind of misconception regarding asana in some people's mind that once you fixed your position in asana you must maintain it for quite some time compulsorily irrespective of pain or discomfort it is causing. You can release asana any time if you find difficult to maintain sustained posture for some reason. There is absolutely no harm if you quit asana in the middle. It is advisable to release it gradually. Whichever asanas or exercises you perform, do them regularly with full conscious self - involvement.

Even though you have mastered many asanas or exercises, it is better to perform selectively. You can adjust according to your requirement. The asana session or exercise session should not lead to increase in discomfort and or pain. You can fix the limit analyzing your capacity. When you are physically indisposed, it is better to refrain from strenuous exercises and asanas and to go for relaxing ones only.

Along with regular asanas and or exercises 'Do Not' forget to —

> Observe a sky for a minute or two in the morning (or evening or any time that suits you). Feel the wideness of the sky closing your eyes, sit quiet / remain gathered for one or two to three (2 – 3) minutes, feel it, fill it in you, and be grateful for being able to feel it.

7.3 Relaxation

Relaxation is a self-regulating method. It is an active – participation strategy. Once mastered, it is easier to relax instantly. People practice variety of techniques of relaxation.

Relaxation Technique (RT) concentrates on the 'rest dimension' of coping. It reactivates the capacity to rest. It is a non-pharmacological intervention.

Relaxation methods involve remission of muscular tension. To relax, literally means to allow oneself to loose or limp leading to rest. Any relaxation strategy is a technique that assists in breaking stress reaction. It exercises its effect by inhibiting or preparing for impending or reducing intensity of stress reaction.

A state of relaxation is a mind – body complex, i.e., experiencing mental and emotional harmony at physical level. A willful awareness in action and reaction which leads to freedom "to do", or "do otherwise", leads to clear and right judgment; ultimately leads to greater efficiency, greater satisfaction at work, and day to day functioning.

Many systems of RT have been developed and are being used to relieve stress related symptoms. They can be used in alleviating localized as well as whole body tension.

The most popular and widely used world over technique of relaxation is Jacobson's PMR (Progressive Muscle Relaxation). It was Edmund Jacobson (1928; 1938) who first introduced relaxation to modern western world of medicine in and around thirties of this century. Since its introduction to clinical field researchers and professionals have been using it to treat number of stress related diseases or symptoms like migraine, hypertension, insomnia, pain, phobia, tension headache etc.

"Shavasana" is an age-old Indian technique of relaxation. It has double advantage; it produces mental as well as bodily relaxation. It is so called, as "shava" means dead body / corpse and asana means posture. It exemplifies dead person - it typifies the features - absence of inner and outer movements; no thoughts, no action therefore no reaction. It is fundamentally a technique that initiates diminution of muscular as well as mental tension - a quiet poise.

Regular practice of relaxation technique takes you to heal stresses and strains of your life.

Preparation

Create conducive atmosphere for relaxation. This is especially mandatory for the beginners. Relax in a quiet undisturbed atmosphere. Do not get disturbed by a phone call, if needed remove the receiver, switch off the mobile, do not attend the door - bell etc.

One may begin –

Sit back in the chair with spine straight (but) not tight – as comfortably as possible – Body erect but not tense, both the legs dropping relaxed, both the hands on the thighs – sluggish - palms facing the sky.

- Gently close your eyes. Breathe your normal breath consciously, in and out 4 – 5 times.
- Let your breath become unhurried, let it become long and slow.
- Take long breath and release slowly. (Be sure, you are not taking too long a breath that disturbs your normal comfortable rhythm.) Say to yourself '**in**' in mind – not with exterior sound, while inhaling, and '**out**' while exhaling. (Do this for 3 – 4 times)
- Watch pauses after you breathe out. (Our body naturally relaxes after exhaling. Follow internally that

relaxation. This is basically a God given gift to us of 'relaxation', feel that relaxation.

- Let your breath go in and in further deep into body parts. (Follow internally your breath reaching inside body parts.)
- Take deep long breath and release slowly. Let your breath spread all over inside the body; feel your breath spreading from within throughout body.

(You have to further relax your body completely. Begin from legs – first right then left.)

- Look at (mentally) the toes of your right foot. Relax your (right) great toe –. Say to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax – relax.
- Relax adjacent second toe (to the right toe), say to yourself – relax, relax, relax.
- Relax your middle toe of right foot, say to yourself - 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax adjacent (to little) toe, say to yourself – 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax your little toe, say to yourself – 'relax, relax, relax'.

(Repeat this procedure for the left foot)

- Relax your left toe. Say to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax – relax'.
- Relax adjacent toe (to the right toe), say to yourself - 'relax, relax, relax.'
- Relax your middle toe say to yourself – 'relax, relax, relax.'

- Relax adjacent fourth (to little) toe, say to yourself – 'relax, relax, relax.'
- Relax your little toe, say to yourself – 'relax, relax, relax.'
- Say to yourself 'all the ten toes are completely relaxed – relax, relax, relax'.)
- Relax your right foot: inside - out, bottom of the foot, upper side of the foot in-side of the foot; completely relax your right foot – inside - out. Your right foot is relaxed completely; let it relax while repeating to yourself 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax your left foot: inside - out, bottom of the foot upper side of the foot in-side of the foot; completely relax your left foot – inside - out. Your left foot is relaxed completely; let it relax while repeating to yourself 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Next, relax your ankle – right, left; completely relax first your right ankle – inside - out. Your right ankle is relaxed completely; let it relax while repeating to yourself 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Next, relax your ankle – right, left; completely relax your left ankle – inside - out. Your left ankle is relaxed completely; let it relax while repeating to yourself 'relax, relax, relax'.

(Both foot are relaxed)

- Relax your right tibia shin (upper bone area of right calf)
- Relax your right calf, saying to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.

- Relax your left tibia shin (upper bone area of left calf)
- Relax your left calf, (upper bone area of right calf)
- Relax your right knee, knee joint, say to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax your left knee, knee joint, say to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax your right thigh, say to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax your left thigh, say to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax your waist, your buttocks, just relax, relax, and relax.

(Thus whole body from your waist down – up to the tips toes is completely relaxed)

- Let your breath be slow and long, small and quiet. Breathe softly three – four times, letting the lower part relax further more and more inside with each breath. Now look at (mentally) the upper part of the body. Each part of the upper portion is to be relaxed.
- Relax your stomach, navel area. Saying to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax sternum area.
- Relax your chest, breast – right side left side
- Relax your lumber region, say to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax your back – right side left side, your spine from lumber region to neck. Say to yourself 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax your shoulders – right – left; say to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.

- Relax the area from shoulder to neck: from right shoulder to neck, similarly from left shoulder to neck; Saying to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.

(Both the hands you have to relax. Let us start with right hand)

- Relax your right hand, all the five fingers inside out – relax your thumb, your index finger, middle finger, ring finger, and your little finger. While saying, 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax your palm inside – outside, upper side, say to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax your wrist, your forearm, elbow, your right arm, your right shoulder, thus your complete right hand is relax, saying to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.
- [(Mentally) Look at your left hand; you have to relax your left hand.]
- Now relax your left hand, all the five fingers inside out – relax your thumb, your index finger, middle finger, ring finger, and our little finger. say to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax your palm inside – outside upper side,
- Relax your left wrist, your forearm, elbow, your left arm, your left shoulder, thus your complete left hand is relax.
- Relax the neck region, say to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax your throat, say to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.
- Relax your chin, your jaw, your teeth, your mouth both the lips, your tongue from inside, your cheeks – right left, your nostrils – right left, your eyes – right

left; your eyebrows – right left; say to yourself, 'relax, relax, relax'.

- Relax your forehead, your backside of the head, upper side of the head, both the sides of your head – your right ear your left ear, your brain.
- Just relax your head from inside out. Let your breath be slow, - slowly release and relax. After every out-breath, let the relaxation go deep inside the body, in each part every organ of the body.

(Thus your whole body from head through your throat, your neck, your shoulders, your hands, through your chest, your breast, your back, your stomach, navel area, your back, lumber region, spine, through your waist, your buttocks, your legs – right left your thighs, knees, knee joints, tibia, calves – right left your ankles – right left, your both foot – right left, fingers of the foot from little finger to the toe right and left is relaxed, completely relaxed.)

Say to yourself, 'slowly relax, relax, relax'. Feel this relaxation. Let it spread all over body. Concentrating in the middle of the chest let your breaths continue to be slow and gradual and relaxed, completely relaxed. Feel it. Experience it. Let there be no thoughts, no emotions, but only relaxation. Feel the relaxed feeling of the body. It is calm and quiet, filled with tranquil quietude. Feel this quietude, fill in this quietude all over the body, experience it, it is perfectly calm and quiet. Let this quietness reach deep inside all the cells of the body. Keep on breathing slowly and feel. This calm is quite soothing and peaceful. Remain in this relaxed state for some time. After a while concentrating in mind, in the middle of the chest slowly open your eyes and come out of the experience. Gradually open your eyes. Remain quiet for some time. Gather your consciousness and gradually come out of the experience.

(You need not remain in one position throughout session, if you feel like you can slowly change your position. You can do this in sitting or lying position. Once you are accustomed you can relax instantly while standing or even walking for a few seconds/minutes. You can go for whichever position you find suitable and comfortable. Do not insist on 'one' position forcibly, instead of relaxation it may cause stress and you loose the very effect of it.

You can repeat the procedure for if you feel like.

You can do this in the morning or evening and or before entering into sleep.

One can proceed by relaxing every minute muscle and part of the body for more deep – deeper and deeper relaxation.

One can relax in supine position too. If you are using floor, do not forget to spread cloth or light mattress.)

Relaxation Sequence

Toes of foot
Foot proper
Ankle
Calves
Knees
Thighs
Waist
Stomach/chest
Back/shoulders
Hands
Throat/neck
Face

7.3.1 Immediate Relaxation

You can relax major parts instantly like this:

Sit back in the chair straight but not tight. (You can do this in supine position also. If you are doing on the floor, do not forget to spread cloth or light mattress.)

Concentrate in the middle of your chest in mind. Take deep long slow breath in – and release it slowly out; have normal breathing rhythm, do this for 2 -3 times, and then concentrating fully on the activity you are doing - take breath in and tighten your complete body – (from toes through waist to head. Let the sequence be – first your foot, legs - from tips of toes to ankle to thigh, waist, buttocks, stomach, chest, back, spine, shoulder, both hands from finger to shoulders, neck-throat, and face), hold your breath for a few seconds/moments tighten, tighten, tighten and relax, release your breath and relax. Just release and relax, let your hands fall sideways, your legs wide apart loose lighten up, breath slow down; with half closed (or fully closed if you feel more comfortable that way) feel the repose. Experience it; let it fill in your entire body.

You can repeat the procedure twice.

This you can do practically anywhere anytime. Once mastered it hardly requires thirty to forty five seconds.

(*Note:* Take care you are not tightening beyond your enduring limits.)

7.3.2 Short Relaxation Methods of Different Kinds

a) Gathered Quiet Sitting →

Sit quietly in the chair (or wherever you are), close your eyes gently, and let your body lay comfortable; gather quiet consciousness, silently breathing - slow and gentle. Remain in the protection of your spiritual Guru or Guide, recite (in mind) His / Her name concentrating in the heart for a while gathering consciousness around it (Namjapa) feeling the presence.

One practiced and established, you can do this any where, in any position, even while talking with somebody.

b) ***Deep Breathing →***

Assume sitting or supine position. Gather your attention. This can be easily done by mentally concentrating in the middle of chest (chest center) or between eyebrows or above the head or tip of the nose wherever that suits you. Concentrating like this, breathe normally slowly, and gradually allow yourself to take l-o-n-g deep breath in and s-l-o-w-l-y let it go out. Let it go in and in; Feel the sensation of deep breath within - deep inside the whole body – let it spread in all the body parts when you exhale. Do this 5 - 6 times or for two to three minutes.

You can do this anywhere any time. One or two deep breathings, time and again otherwise also, can be practiced wherever you are whatever you are doing.

c) ***Abdominal Breathing →***

Lie down comfortably or assume comfortable sitting position. Close your eyes gently. Concentrate your consciousness in the heart (or head) and attend to your breathing.

Breathe comfortable deep and long breaths. Let your Breath collect in abdomen. As you breathe in your abdomen extends and as you breathe out your abdomen go in.

Fill in your abdomen with air while inhaling and empty your abdomen while exhaling. Feel the bulging of abdomen when you inhale the air; take your abdomen inside when you breathe out the air.

You may experience a kind of stillness after every breathing cycle i.e., when air is out – when you breathe out natural relaxation occupies the body. Let it spread all over, feel it experience, let it go within.

(Thoracic [chest] respiration is more passive and autonomous than abdominal which is more active and voluntary. By taking abdominal respiration abdominal muscles can be actively contracted and actively relaxed. Abdominal breathing can bring more filling of lower lobes of lungs with diaphragm pushed down more actively; breath reaches deeper and relaxes deeper.)

(You can practice abdominal breathing one to two to three minutes in the beginning, adjusting suitable period to your personal disposition, later on you can gradually increase the duration. This can be very well done in the office too or wherever you are and whenever you can. Only thing required, is, you have to spare some quiet time - a few seconds or minutes - for yourself.)

7.3.3 Relaxation using T – R (Tension – Relaxation) Method

Sit quiet and comfortable in the chair. (Or you can lie down in supine position. If you are doing on the floor, do not forget to spread cloth or light mattress.)

Close your eyes gently.

Concentrating in the heart in mind take two or three long and deep breathes.

Concentrate back on normal regular breath, prepare – wish to relax the whole body.

(You have to tense and relax your body parts alternately. Begin by foot)

Tense your foot – right and left. (You can press your foot toes of foot on the floor tightening them. Say to yourself:

> 'tense, tense, tense' - feel the tension in both – right and left foot for a moment –a few seconds and then release and relax; say to yourself:
>
> 'relax, relax, relax'. (Let the tension go, let your foot lay loose)

Take your breath in, let it go out. (Do this 2 –3 times)

Tense your legs from ankle to knees both – right and left. (push and tighten your calf muscles and knees and knee joints and say to yourself:

> *'tense, tense, tense'* (feel the tension in calves and knees for a few seconds and then relax, say to yourself: *'relax, relax, relax'*. (Let the tension go and relax your calves and knees and knee joints.)

Take your breath in, let it go out. (Do this 2 –3 times)

Next tense your thighs – right and left, tense them, say to yourself:

> *'tense, tense, tense'* (feel the tension in thighs for a few seconds, [you can press your thighs

against chair] and then relax, say to yourself: *'relax, relax, relax'*. (Let the tension go and relax your thighs and both legs from thighs to toes.)

Take your breath in, let it go out slowly. (Do this 2 –3 times)

Next tense your waist and buttocks tense them say to your self:

'tense, tense, tense' (feel the tension in waist parts and buttocks for a few seconds, [you can push your waist and buttocks against the base of chair or floor if you are doing on the floor] and then relax), say to yourself: *'relax, relax, relax'*.

Take your breath in, let it go out. (Do this 2 –3 times)

Next tense your stomach and navel area, tense and say to yourself:

'tense, tense, tense' (feel the tension in stomach for a few seconds, [you can pull your abdomen in] and then relax, let it go loose) say to yourself: *'relax, relax, relax'*.

Take your breath in, let it go out. (Do this 2–3 times). Next-

Tense your chest and breast, say to yourself:

'tense, tense, tense' (feel the tension in chest and breast for a few seconds, [you can fill in your chest and breast with your breath] and then relax, let your breath go out) then say: *'relax, relax, relax'*.

Take your breath in, let it go out. (Do this 2 –3 times). Next-

> Tense your back and spine, say to yourself:
>
> *'tense, tense, tense'* (feel the tension in back and spine for a few seconds, [you can press your back and spine against the back of your chair] and then relax, let your breath go out) and say: *'relax, relax, relax'*.

Take your breath in, let it go out. (Do this 2–3 times). Next-

> Tense your hands both right and left, say to yourself:
>
> *'Tense, tense, tense'* (feel the tension hands for a few seconds, [you can clinch fists and tighten both hands by straightening them] and then relax, let your breath go out) and say: *'relax, relax, relax'*.

Take your breath in, let it go out. (Do this 2–3 times). Next-

> Tense your neck and throat, say to yourself:
>
> *'tense, tense, tense'* (feel the tension in neck and throat for a few seconds, [tighten, tighten] and relax, let your breath go out) and say: *'relax, relax, relax'*.

Take your breath in, let it go out. (Do this 2 –3 times). Next-

> Tense your face say to yourself:
>
> *'tense, tense, tense'* (feel the tension in face for a few seconds, [you can fill in your breath in your cheeks, clinch your eyes, press your lips tightly, tense the back side of the head, tighten, tighten] and then relax, let your breath go out, remove the pressure from all

parts of the face and head and relax), say: *'relax, relax, relax'*.

Take your breath in, let it go out. (Do this 2 –3 times).

Let the whole body settle relaxed, loose, legs apart, both limbs limp, head and eyes droop, breath shallow and slow. Putting your consciousness above the head or between eyebrows or in front or in chest – wherever you find comfortable let your breathing be slow gentle and regular. Remain limp and relax for some time. Let the relaxation and accompanied quietness and calmness spread all over the body. Fill all the body parts with quietness and peace, with every gentle slow breath let the quietness go deep within and reach inside deep inside the cells of the body parts.

Concentrating in the middle of the chest / heart in mind slowly open your eyes and gather your consciousness comfortably. This can be done in sleeping position too.

7.3.4 The Whole Body Short Relaxation with T-R Method

Find a quiet place.

Sit still in the chair and tighten your whole body holding breath for a few seconds (whatever period you feel and find tolerable – may be for two or three or five or more seconds), tighten, tighten, tense, tense, tense (feel the tension of the whole body – you can press the body against back of the chair, close your eyelids tightly, clinch the fists, press your foot on the floor with pressure), and then release the tension - let it go out and relax. Let your body go flaccid, loose and limp; feel the limp and the looseness.

(While tightening the body let the sequence be – from foot to face or face vice versa however you need not bother excessively for the sequence.) Let your breathing be slow and deep. You can repeat the procedure twice or thrice if you feel necessary.

This also can be done in sleeping (supine) position, once accustomed one can do this while standing too.

7.3.5 Short Holistic Relaxation

> Find a quiet place and time (This is essential for the beginners) and wish to release any tension.

> Sit on a comfortable chair or lie down on a mattress and Stretch out comfortably.

> Let the hands drop loosely by the sides of the body.

> Close your eyes slowly, touching lower and upper eyelids gently.

> Let there be gentle smile on the face. Breathe in and out normally. Let your breathing be - soft and comfortable.

Loosen all of the body parts one after another. Relax all the toes of foot, ankles, and complete foot (both - right and left). Take the relaxation further to calf muscles, knees, waist, buttocks, stomach, navel area, chest, lumber region, back, fingers of both hands, palms, wrists, biceps, both the shoulders, neck, throat, face – chin, teeth, lips, tongue, both cheeks, nostrils, eyes, eyebrows, forehead, upper head, back side of the head, sides right and left of the head, and both ears. Thus whole body is relaxed.

Take deep long breaths 2 – 3 times spreading the relaxation all over the body. Let the relaxation go deep within every time you breathe out.

Slowly, bring your attention in the chest rather behind the heart as you relax further.

Let there be no idea, the mind does not concentrate on any idea, do not try to solve a problem, do not ruminate on impressions, do not ruminate on sensations, and do not ruminate on any emotion. Lay silent for a while looking at your breathing. Let there be complete silence. Do not exert just let it happen. Let the peace - silence take possession of your existence. Only, experience the state, feel the state from within. Just feel and dwell in it.

Note: Most people, with regular practice can learn to relax, can learn to reverse muscular tension or tension in body parts or organs and relax. Most people need fifteen days to one month to master relaxation method of his or her choice)

7.4 Meditation

There is no one 'way' of meditation. Truly speaking, every one has to (and every one can) devise his or her, own way of meditating. There are many ways and forms of meditation. One has to choose and think up method according to one's bent and capacity.

We commonly associate meditation to spiritual field. In India, people are more familiar with the term 'Dhyana' than meditation. The English word 'meditation ' has gained more popularity recently. However, these two terms are used interchangeably these days. In science of yoga, dhyan or meditation is done to come in union with 'the Divine', 'The Supreme'. While attempting to attain this goal – the health rather superior health is a 'by – product'. The English word 'meditation' here has been used to express the Indian idea of 'Dhyana'.

(refer Sri Aurobindo, 1973, LoY, Vol. 23).

7.4.1 Basics of Meditation

In meditation there is inner concentration of the consciousness. Meditation is going inside. Generally our consciousness is scattered. Mind and thoughts go in all directions. In meditation you draw back all your consciousness and concentrate at one place on single subject or object. In meditation you bring your spread – scattered mental faculties together and gather your all attention at some single focus. You withdraw your consciousness from outside and center it at one object or idea. You focus your will and thought on the idea behind the object of meditation. Meditation means a continuous dwelling of the mind on a series of ideas or thoughts forming a single subject; regarding mentally a single subject. You can thus concentrate and contemplate an object of focus. It is a sustained observation. In fact, a scientist frequently practices this type of concentration when s/he works on some problem. Such a sustained concentration you can also notice when a poet is contemplating a poem. In yogic or spiritual meditation the gathering of consciousness is fixed on the Divine or aspect of the Divine. Once you center your mind on the object you need to allow stream of thought to flow naturally. You regard the object mentally. The basic principle of meditation is mental concentration in thought, vision, or knowledge of the subject. In the beginning you are straining a bit to hold your concentration your mind on the meditative object but soon you learn to hold it habitually and securely, and unite yourself with it.

Just as to obtain a desired result you need to observe appropriate modus operandi; Meditation to be effective, you need to follow proper procedure that begins with right attitude.

Described below is a meditative practice based on certain principles of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. It is founded on the core doctrine of ascent and descent of the forces - descent of higher force/s from above into the individual to a sincere call - aspiration - an ascent of the individual from below. The integral union of the individual divine with that of the Divine Supreme effects the desired change i.e., transformation of nature.

Meditation — 1

Integral Meditation on Peace (IM on Peace)

There are many objects and purposes for which one can meditate. The best object for meditation to attain health or to get rid of stress is 'peace'; for peace is a foundation to restore homeostasis or healthful hetero-stasis. Sri Aurobindo has very precisely said, 'with peace comes cure'. On the foundation of peace one is able to receive and absorb higher forces. The following steps may help you go through meditational experience. Precise steps are detailed down in the '*procedure proper*'

Steps

- Wish to meditate
- Find a quiet Place and Time
    - ❖ Sit quietly in straight comfortable normal posture with eyes closed (or open, preferably closed especially necessary and useful for beginners) (You can sit on the chair or on the floor; use cloth sheet - asan or light mattress if you are meditating sitting on the ground).
- Take deep - long but normal breaths slowly three to six (3 - 6) times.

Let your breath go deep within. (Spread the breath all over body each time you complete breathing cycle)

- Relax Major muscles and parts of your body. (Starting from toe to head)
- Concentrate in the heart (or behind the heart or head).
  (Think of this energy in the heart in the form of Flame of light.)
- Spread this energy - inner light all over the body.
  (First to the upper part of the body i.e., chest shoulder and above –to head and then to the lower side – from chest and below -to toe.)
- Give time to the light to occupy the whole body.
  (Remain quiet and gathered for some time. Surrender to the Divine.)
- Think of peace around you and above your head.
- Aspire ask that it may come.
  (You can think of peace in the form of cool white light).
- Invite peace, say to yourself - peace, peace, peace, come peace, peace calm, peace.
- When something touches, say quietly that's it; repeat saying – 'peace, peace calm, peace. '
- Receive and assimilate peace.
  (Let it settle down in your head. Call the Divine Shakti (Adi Shakti) to confirm peace and calm in you. Let it continue for a few minutes. Keep receiving and absorbing.

- Take this peace / peace force from head to toe. (Let it flow down from head to toe.)
- Let the peace reach deep within.
- Dwell in peace. Surrender to it. Give time to get it absorbed.
- Take the peace force to the affected part (Allow it to work there and remove the pain and ailment and replace it with peace.)
- Call the Divine to confirm 'peace'.
- Surrender to it.
- Thank the Divine.
- Stay quiet for some time. To come out - Concentrating (mentally) in the heart slowly open your eyes.
- Remain quiet and slowly gather your awareness.

Meditation

Procedure proper

Following detail description may assist you enter into the peace proper.

Prerequisite → * Wish to meditate, to go through the experience (Allow mind to take the experience, let yourself, go through the experience.)

The necessary conditions are – aspiration, inner quietude, patience, and vigilance, - to hurry nothing, to force nothing. So far as external conditions are concerned, there are no essential external conditions, but solitude and seclusion at the time of meditation as well as stillness of body are the most useful. (Sri Aurobindo, 1971)

→ Find a quiet place and Time.

* Sit quiet in straight and comfortable normal posture.

(You may assume a sitting position, which may come naturally to you. 'Lotus posture' – (Padmasan) or half lotus – (ardhapadmasan) or Sukhasan – asana that gives you comfort or a simple cross-legged comfortable posture may serve the purpose. Many people prefer a posture – right leg below the left thigh and the left across – on the right thigh. In the beginning it is better to accustom to one kind of asana position. Or you can sit erect in the chair in a quiet natural posture. If you feel like changing your position while meditating you better do that, you need not insist on maintaining a strenuous posture for long if it is creating ache or pain. To be natural and quiet that is more important. Find yourself comfortably and calmly seated. Use cloth sheet - asan or light mattress if you are meditating sitting on the ground.)

→ Close your eyes gently, lips gently touching one another. (No frowning, no tightness)

(Let your breathing be normal the way you usually do, just inhale and exhale normally, be it slow, regular and effortless.)

→ Concentrate in the middle of the chest - behind the heart in mind (or you can concentrate between eyebrows or in the head or above the head or anywhere in the head, - wherever suits you).

→ (Concentrating at the chest center mentally), take deep long normal breath in slowly and let it go out slowly. Let the breath spread all over the body each time you breathe out.

(Concentrating your consciousness in the heart, take deep breath and slowly let it go out. Each time you breathe out let the breath go deep inside the body, let it spread throughout the body, let it reach deep in all the body parts, all the organ(s) – into the cells of the body. Just go deeper and deeper after each breath. Do not resist just go deep inside. Feel the inwardness.)

Do this deep breathing 3 to 6 times.

* **Relax major muscles and parts of your body, one by one.**

  (You can start from toe to head (or head to toes) - begin with toes- fingers, relax your foot right left, your legs – calves, knees, thighs, waist, buttocks, navel area stomach, chest, back, shoulders, hands, throat neck, face and head (chin, jaw, lips, teeth, cheeks, eyes, forehead ears-inside out) and head. Tthe whole body from toe to head / head to toe is relaxed.

* **Concentrating in the heart (or head)**

  Think of energy in the heart in the form of Flame of Light – a golden white light and spread this energy inner light all through your body (This is an inner form of your existence). **Let this inner light emanate and fill in your whole body.**

(Heart is a center of energy – a place of true inner existence, of inner being. Heart as an organ, is, in a real sense a pumping station, pumps out 4-5 liters of blood every second throughout body, this goes on continuously produces lot of energy. In fact this energy is a part of the universal total energy, which exists in you and in each one of us; this energy is fundamentally a bit of the universal divine energy – Aadi Shakti. Think of this heart energy as a flame of light – a golden white light. Look at and concentrate on this flame of golden white light of your inner existence. *This is the light of the individual divine Surrender to this Aadi Shakti –*

Say – 'O Divine Supreme, I surrender I surrender take possession of this body and manifest thyself in it'.

Spread this golden white light all over the body. First take this light to the upper part of your body - chest and above and then to the lower. Fill in your chest, breast with this divine golden white light. Your chest and breast are filled with this inner golden white light. Then take this light to and fill in your neck, throat, and head, both hands right as well as left – let it fill in you, from shoulders to arms – both right left, elbow - right left, forearm- right left, wrist right left, palms- right left, and fingers. Thus upper part of your body is filled with divine golden white light.

Next, let this light then further flow down to the lower part of your body - from chest sternum to toe; fill in, with this energy, light, your chest sternum, navel area, abdomen, your back, spine, waist buttocks, right leg - thigh, knee, knee joints, tibia, calf, ankle, tendoakilis, foot – upper side, bottom side, to the toes. Take this light to the left leg – and fill in your thigh, the knee, knee joints, tibia, the calf, ankle, foot – upper side, lower side, fingers to the toes.

Thus the whole body is filled with the light of your individual divine. Let this light reach each and every part of the body. Let it reach each and every cell of the body. This is a true form of your inner existence – illumined and bright.)

→ **Give time to the light to occupy whole body.**

(The whole body is illumined with the light of the individual divine. Your inner existence is now ready to receive higher force/s from above. Your inner existence has come to the surface occupied the whole body/being)

→ **Remain concentrated.**

(There are higher forces in the Universe. Peace is one of the higher forces. The inner being the inner existence has capability to contact higher forces. There is a serene peace in the universe in the space and beyond, calm and quiet peace all over. There is a Peace around you and above you. You can think of this peace in the form of glow of white light. Invite this peace - peace force.)

* Think of Peace. (Around you and above your head, in the universe)

* Aspire and ask that it may come. Invite it,

→ Just say, 'I invite, I invite, come peace, come peace, come, peace, peace, peace.'

Say silently, 'peace, peace, peace, come peace, peace, peace'.

When something touches say quietly that's it; repeat 'peace, peace, peace, calm, peace, Peace, peace'. Feel it.

→ (You can think of Peace as a cool white light.)

* Receive and Assimilate peace

(Concentrating in or behind the heart let it come down, let the glow or beam of light of peace penetrate your head. Just allow it come down into your head your brain. Let it get accumulated and assimilated in the head let it settle down in the head.

Give time for assimilation. Pray to the Mother Aadi Shakti (or your Ishtadevata) to get it assimilated as much as you can.)

→ Say to yourself 'peace, peace, peace' and assimilate.

→ Let it settle down in your head, peace is settling down in the head, say to yourself, 'peace, peace, and peace'!

Give time. Do this for a few seconds, few minutes. Remain open to the Mother and assimilate.

→ Let it flow down from head to toe (going through reaching every part of the body)

→ Let it flow down from head through throat to chest,

(Slowly it is flowing down from head to the throat – throat is filled with peace, to chest – while flowing down to chest filling your neck, shoulders, your hands right left – both arms, elbow, forearms, wrists, palms inside out, fingers- index finger, middle finger, ring finger, little finger tip of the fingers, your breast and chest — all are filled with peace, with white light of peace.)

→ Say 'peace, peace, peace' as it flows down and fill in your neck, shoulders, your hands right left – both arms, elbow, forearms, wrists, palms inside out, fingers- index finger, middle finger, ring finger, little finger tip of the fingers, your breast and chest

→ Further let the peace, light of peace flow down from chest and fill in your navel area, stomach, abdomen, back, spine and waist, buttocks. The peace has filled in the navel area, abdomen, back, spine waist, and buttocks with its cool white light. All the parts your stomach navel area, abdomen, back, spine waist, and buttocks are filled with white light of peace Keep on filling peace saying, 'peace, peace, peace'!

→ Further let the peace light of peace flow down and fill your both legs (right left), thighs, knees, knee joints, calves, ankle, foot - upper bottom, inside outside up to toe(s). The peace has filled in your right thigh, left thigh; further it is flowing down and filling your knees – right left, your knee joints –right left, your calves – right left, ankle – right left, foot right left - upper side bottom inside. All the parts are filled with the white light of peace.

Fill in your toes of both the feet with peace.

Peace is filled in all the fingers from great toe to the little toe of your right and left foot.

Say to yourself 'peace, peace, peace'!

- Keep on receiving and assimilating peace as much as you can.

→ Let the peace reach – each and every cell of your body and dwell deep within.

Repeating to yourself 'peace, peace, peace'. Keep on receiving and assimilating.

(Let the light of peace / peace - force reach each and every organ of your body. Peace has filled in every part every organ of your body. Let it reach each and every cell of your body. Let there be peace, peace and peace everywhere. Let the peace dwell in each and every cell of the body. Keep on receiving from above and flow down from head through throat neck, through chest navel area through abdomen through waist through rectum to legs, through thighs through knees through calves through foot from little finger to toes. Your throat, your chest breast, navel area, stomach, back, spine, waist, buttocks thighs, knees –knee joints, claves-right left, ankle right left, foot right left, inside out till toes all filled with peace.

With every recital let the peace reach and go deep into the cells. Receive and assimilate and absorb peace as much as you can.

* **Call and allow the Divine to confirm Peace**

(Request the Mother Supreme (or Ishta Daivat) to make you able to receive and assimilate as much peace as possible.)

→ Give time, Surrender, just say, 'I surrender to thee', 'peace, peace, peace'

→ Assimilate and absorb, saying to yourself, 'peace peace, peace, calm, peace'.

(With each utter, feel it reaching - going deep inside every cell of your body.)

→ Let the body dwell in peace, Peace all over, in and out. Feel the peace; keep on receiving; and assimilating peace as much as you can.

(Whole body is dwelling in peace. Each and every cell is dwelling in peace. Keep on saying 'peace, peace, peace'.)

→ Keep dwelling on in peace repeating peace, peace, peace; assimilate and absorb – as much as you can.

→ Concentrating inside just receive from above; let it penetrate your head. Just receive and assimilate in the head and flow down from head through body till toes. Let it get assimilated into the cells of your body; peace is getting assimilated just say – 'peace, peace, peace'.

→ Allow time for assimilation and absorption.

(This is a divine peace that has entered into your body. The peace has a healing power. Let this peace force work in your body. Take this peace to the affected part of your body and allow it to work inside. Peace force is working. Request the Divine Mother (Shakti) to confirm Peace. Allow time. Concentrate peace force at the affected part. Allow it to work there and remove pain and ailment and replace them with peace.

→ Take this force to the affected part allow it to work replace pain or stress with peace - quiet peace and calm.

→ Feel and Experience. Allow the Mother Divine (Adi Shakti) confirm peace in you.

(Contemplating, Mother is confirming peace).

(Experiencing peace, dwelling in peace, let each and every cell remain in peace. Keep on absorbing and assimilating peace as much as you can. Peace is reaching deeper and deeper inside. The whole body is resting in peace. Peace, peace and peace all over.)

* **Thank the Divine for the grace; for being able to receive and absorb this higher force - peace.**

→ Stay quiet gathered contemplating for some time.

→ You are completely at peace

→ Remain quiet contemplating.

→ (Gradually come out of the experience. [or let the experience come to an end on its own.])

→ Concentrating in the heart slowly open your eyes.

(Remain quiet for some time before coming to conscious awareness.)

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You can repeat this twice a day. (In times of difficulty or bodily discomfort in some part twice a day is most desirable). You can do this on getting up in the morning and evening or when going to bed. (of course one can meditate at whatever time s/he feels and finds suitable.)

(Note: You may experience a sort of heaviness in the head while concentrically meditating on peace. Let it get dissipated all over the body; request the Divine to be able to receive and assimilate as much as you can. You can open your eyes if you feel like and again go inward.

You can quit and come out of your inward state anytime, in the middle of the process. It is better to come out slowly, remaining gathered for a few minutes after quitting.

It is comparatively easy to go for concentrated meditation after sufficient practice of short meditation sessions. Practice of relaxation sessions also helps in going inward.

If you are meditating on the floor, always use a sheet of cloth or light mattress.

> You can meditate by taking instructions from the Guru / Teacher externally (may be in the form of person, or cassette recording) or following the instructions internally.)

(The whole procedure may take thirty to forty five (30 - 45) minutes or more, with actual meditation period being approximately twenty minutes.)

(Depending on the readiness, some steps can be shortened, for example- some people relax the whole body instantly [or with practice this period is gradually substantially reduced] and can establish the contact with higher/divine forces immediately securely.)

Integral Meditation on peace
Salient points

1. *Preparation*
   Inner and outer quietening (Quieting the body and mind)
2. *Bringing the inner being / the inner existence to the fore*
3. *Invocation → a call to the higher force 'peace'*
4. *Assimilation and absorption*
5. *Gratitude*

7.4.2 How to Enhance Inner Peace

To enhance and maintain inner peace – each time when you feel restless just repeat saying inside without exterior sound; and thinking of the Divine, peace, O' let my heart the whole body be at peace, my heart, the whole body peace, peace, peace.

Do it steadily for 2 –3 minutes.

Summary Steps

* *Wish to meditate*
* *Sit quietly with eyes closed*
* *Concentrate in the heart*
* *Relax Major muscles / body parts*
* *Take deep long slow breath, 3-6 times*
* *Go deep within*
* *Surrender to the Divine Supreme*
* *Spread the heart energy all over the body (Give time to occupy)*
* *Concentrating in the heart open yourself and aspire for Peace*
* *Think of peace around /above your head (in the form of white light)*
* *Invite it say to yourself 'Peace, peace, peace, come, peace, calm, peace.*
* *Let it settle down into your head*
* *Receive and assimilate – as much as you can.*
* *Call the Divine to confirm peace*
* *Let it flow down from head to toe reaching each and every cell*
* *Thank the Divine.*
* *Stay quiet for some time and slowly come out of the experience. (concentrating in the heart mentally and slowly open eyes)*

(The technique was first introduced in the International Breast Cancer Conference, Breast Cancer in the New Millennium, 2000, Nagpur, India.)

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Meditation – 2

Meditation is turning inside.

- Sit straight and relaxed – for a while (You can sit on the chair or on the floor; use cloth sheet / asan or light mattress if you are meditating sitting on the ground).
- Close your eyes softly – remain relaxed breathing softly and quietly.
- Relax the whole body – all body parts.
- (Staying quiet and relaxed breathing softly) witness breath reaching deep inside the whole body.
- Aspire for peace to come, (saying to yourself – peace, peace, calm, peace, peace.
- Give time – receive and aspire – peace peace calm peace, peace within.
- Dwell in peace, feel the Peace.
- In Peace and quiet The Eternal Manifests.
- In Peace and quiet The Eternal Manifests.
- In Peace and quiet The Eternal Manifests.
- Concentrate and stay in it.
- Become aware of It.
- Remain concentrated
- Thank the Divine eternal before you come back to your normal conscious awareness.

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Meditation → 3

(Practice meditation)

- Wish to meditate
- Sit quiet with eyes closed (or Open if you find it necessary)

  (You can sit on the chair or on the floor; use cloth sheet - asan or light mattress if you are meditating sitting on the ground).
- Relax whole body – major body parts (starting from foot to head.)
- Concentrate in the heart (or head or above head) and take deep – long normal breaths three - four (3 – 4) times.
- Concentrating thus in the heart (or head) focus your attention on something around you, e.g., a sound – chirping of a bird (or a machine or anything that is naturally catching your attention) or a scene – rising son (or an ocean or a sky etc.) or thinking of the divine or your guru or you may consciously recite any mantra.
- Remain focused for five to ten (5 –10) minutes.

  (If your attention goes wayward bring it back to the object of your attention)
- Looking at your chest / in the heart (mentally), slowly come out of focused attention; open your eyes.
- Remain quiet for a while before turning to ordinary consciousness.

You can meditate using meditational music or no music.

(One can meditate on 'OM' or an idea such as "God in all' or 'All is in God'. Meditation on peace is especially useful to restore unrest and is the best foundation for further progress and deep meditation, as peace is the base element of any achievement any change or transformation.)

(Once adapted one can call peace anywhere. Just sit quietly with eyes closed (or open), concentrating in mind in the middle of chest invite peace. Wish sincerely and call and say 'peace, peace, peace' and allow it to work and enter. With experience you know and feel the presence, be thankful to the Divine, feel the gratitude.)

Learn to remain Gathered inwardly

You can develop the habit to remain gathered inwardly by practicing concentration in the heart (or head), breathing softly – long and deep, holding on mind on peace proper, and dwelling in peace, being grateful to the Divine. The steps you can follow →

- ➢ Assume a relaxed poise (wherever you are)
- ➢ Centre your consciousness in the heart (or anywhere in the head)
- ➢ Hold on your mind on Peace.
- ➢ Remain gathered inwardly.
- ➢ Breathing softly and deep, after every out breath, go deep within.
- ➢ Enter into peace, dwell in peace, contemplate on peace, feel the peace, while saying silently, 'peace, peace, peace, peace, calm, peace for a few seconds (or a minute or two or more)

- Stay quiet inward, gathered, silently consciously saying 'peace' peace, peace.

Practice this, initially for a few seconds or a minute or two – three minutes. Gradually, extend the time from seconds to minutes to hours.

A few long and deep natural breaths off and on help you remain gathered inwardly.

Concentrating in the heart (or head) contemplating on peace assists you stay gathered inwardly even when you are talking t other person.

Practically you can do this while resting, working, even when talking, standing, and sitting – practically anywhere anytime.

7.4.3 Facilitatory Conditions for Meditation

Below, are mentioned some of the guidelines specified by Sri Aurobindo in his work "Sadhana through Meditation"* (Letters on Yoga, Vol. XXIII, 1971) that may help you gain better insight into your meditational experience and or meditation proper.

- Do not insist on maintaining strenuous posture, change slowly if needed and assume a comfortable position.
- Take care not to be over-eager. It may disturb your quiet and balance.
- It is better to make deeper concentration when you are alone and quiet.

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* For further deeper understanding reader can refer books like 'Letters on Yoga', by Sri Aurobindo, chapter 'Sadhana through Meditation' (1971, Vol. 23); 'Dhyana" by M. P. Pandit (2000) published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, India.

- Better to remain quiet for a few moments before opening the eyes and coming out of the inwardness.
- The more one concentrates the more the force of yoga grows.
- You must be prepared for the meditation being sometimes not successful and not get upset by it.
- In the beginning for a long time, concentration is necessary even by effort because the nature, our consciousness is not ready.
- It should be noted that the result of the yogic processes is not, except in rare cases, immediate.

  (Not to be panicked if you fail to attain inwardness in the beginning or later at times)
- It is not easy to get into silence. It is easier to let the silence and peace descend into you.
- It is quite natural to want to meditate while reading yogic literature.
- Make peace and calm your friends and call them, come, peace, peace, peace, peace, come!

7.5 Introspection

The close adjunct to Stress Management is Self Analysis. Truly speaking there is no parallel to introspection self-analysis. Persistent regular self-analysis can work wonders. Aggression can be calmed, reduced. Laziness / idleness can be overturned. Quietude can be set in. Transformation can be realized. It is a path to self - control and self realization.

We are generally critical about other's behaviour but rarely our own. We candidly blame other person's rigidity as a cause of our irritation, our stress. We hardly bother or think that our behaviour can create stress in the other person. We don't usually sense our specific behaviour pattern– say some typical habit or emotion (e.g., jealousy, anger, anxiety) may invite trouble, may create adverse undesirable circumstances for ourselves and for others. We barely analyze our own behaviour.

'Contrary climate about which we complain in our lives is generally brought by some undesirable element in us; that needs to be eliminated by 'steady vigorous discipline" so says M. P. Pandit, (1984) a philosopher, a spiritualist experimenter. And this, you will find, is, frequently valid in case of most individuals.

7.6 Disciplining Thoughts, Emotions, Overt Response *Through Self – Analysis / Self – Examination*

To gain control over your life and life stresses, one way is to learn to discipline your thoughts, train your emotions, and exercise will to control your responses. You have to learn to transform your 'reaction' into conscious 'action' – not an easy task. To surmount this difficulty, key lies in self – examination. How to go about it? How to do it? You have to *develop a habit of self – examination*. You need to observe your reaction. This you can do by self – examination steadily and routinely.

Employ a technique of four Ds (4Ds) - Devote, Denote, Decide and Do.

Devote – give some time daily to self-analyze your behaviour. *Denote* - designate the response that has caused trouble. Contemplate and *Decide* – either to comply or not to comply with the response. And, once decided conduct yourself accordingly *Do* it in all sincerity. Follow the rule, response is either made or not made / present or absent.

Devote some time daily or at least weekly for this -

> "Observe your reactions (responses - to things people object) in your day – to - day life."
>
> "Watch 'how do (did) you respond?"

Denote your response. Designate what was it? What is it?

Contemplate a while – and

"Decide you will make progress each day in abolition of undesirable reaction" (or habit). Contemplate an alternative response and strictly adhere to the contemplated response. Take control of your behaviour and do accordingly in all sincerity.

How to decide appropriate - desirable - necessary response?

Before reacting or responding - do this:

a. 'Step back for a moment.'
b. Contemplate hold back for a while, be conscious and let the true response come forward from within.

This facilitates making up your mind whether a response is actually necessary in the circumstance.

Pursue this in every trivial matter - for example, even when mixing with others, writing, going out, meeting with other people, serving, studying, eating sleeping, gossiping etc., etc.

Begin by a small thing, suppose- you have decided to eliminate anger; contemplated a desired response – 'no shouting' - rule out possibility of all types of its opposite expressions. Carry out its expression (e.g., soft tone, simple words, no harshness) in every situation, with every person you meet. Observe yourself – your reactions in various situations. (Before reacting, withdraw, stop for a moment.) Strictly follow the rule –'you are either doing it' or 'you are not doing it'.

You have decided to speak softly so you are 'responding softly'.

You have decided not to shout so 'you are not shouting' at anyone, in all situations.

- Next day, ask yourself how did you conduct yourself?

  Record your progress. Steer yourself determinedly.
- Make 'it' (a desired response – 'no shouting') - a habit.

  And see the results.

You can achieve victory over your 'wrong movement' / undesirable response however small or trivial thing it may be. *One victory lays a foundation for another*. Try and practice steadily and routinely; one thing at a time is a best rule. And see the results.

Converting Reaction into 'Action'

Steps:

1. Observe your reaction(s).
2. Step back for a while
3. Become conscious of the response from within
4. Reflect upon

Reflecting Upon / Disciplining Wrong Movement / habit / element in nature

Follow

Technique of '4Ds'

- Devote – (give time to yourself)
- Denote (signify – which habit?)
- Decide (settle on a decision).
- Do it (steady consistent adherence)

(Rule – Either to 'do it' or 'do not do it')

Pursue

Technique of 'self-examination

Ask: how did you conduct yourself today

(Record, Report, & Progress)

7.6.1 Self-Questioning

Many times, you will find straightforward simple question, put to yourself, may bring to your notice the *core* of the troubling problem and offer help in getting solution.

When you are angry and furious or disturbed by someone else's behaviour and furious.

Plainly ask, "*Can I be wrong?*"

"Am I in the wrong any way?"

Suppose you are angry with your spouse,

Ask yourself - Is my partner (wife / or husband) only always (hundred percent) wrong?

"Am I, in any way, responsible for my stress or unhappiness?" Answer honestly, Ask - What is my contribution to my stress?'

Suppose, you are chided by your boss, (for being late or for not performing well) you are fuming -

Question → "Is boss really a trouble? Is his/her scolding unjust or am I providing ground for my difficulty e.g., reaching late, daily to the office?

"Am I whiling away time in the Office?"

"Am I sufficiently motivated to do the work"?

"Am I excessively aggravated/motivated?"

"Do I possess the required aptitude, right attitude for the task I am doing – if not what can I do for improvement, have I invested my energy for bringing myself to my maximum? Have I pursued necessary efforts sufficiently for improvement"?

"Shall I accept, can I accept the reality of (even) failure in a dignified way"!

You can go for →

Suggestive Questioning –

Instead of constant grumbling why should I not accept the limitation of my capacity (e.g., Too high or too low reasoning ability, resources, skills and interactions etc.) and accompanying associated disadvantages?

Rationally ponder over this, it may lessen your discomfort.

One must remember, there are always individual differences; every person is blessed with different capabilities, characteristics and environment; Every person is born with different inclination and share of luck, luck with respect to money, achievements, success, failure, and even the kind of interpersonal relationships. People vary in capacity to handle number of things simultaneously.— Have I realized this?

One can not master everything, 'all' in one life. One can not attempt many things at a time. Ask -

Am I expecting 'more' than justified?

Am I doing 'more' than what I can do?

Am I doing 'less' than what I can do?

True realistic answers to these questions open the gate toward insight.

Respect what 'you have' and exploit it to the maximum in the interest of yourself and others.

7.7 Insightful Appraisal of Personality

There is a relationship between some personality characteristics and perceived felt stress.

How you think about the stressor and the world in general affect the severity of your stress experience. We have seen that some personalities are recognized disease – prone personalities, they tempt diseases whereas some personalities are known to insulate people from bad harmful effects of stress.

Think and question —

Am I a kind of person who invites stress? Do I possess characteristics that allure stress?

Are you a Type A personality or Type B or hardy personality? Find out.

Do you habitually set high standards? Do you prescribe rigid (unrealistic) time limits for yourself? Do you behave aggressively dominantly and come frequently into conflict with other persons? A person who is terribly time conscious is unlikely to remain comfortable at other person's lapses regarding time and get quickly upset and or frustrated and angry.

Check, whether you are a committed person, usually complete the task at hand, accept challenges securely, and are optimistically oriented; Or if you are profoundly integrated, unperturbed in disparate circumstances, have faith in yourself and higher Self, generally calm and quiet peaceful stable person within, then, you may be, sufficiently able to keep your stress under control.

The above two passages describe 'asking stress' personality (the former – Type A) and 'keeping away stress' personality characteristics (the latter – hardy and stable). Assess and determine, which category 'you' belong to.

You can take the help of a personologist / a personality psychologist in this respect.

The message underlined is –

> Appraise yourself –whether you have opened the account to accumulate stress.
>
> If on your own accord, you are encouraging your stress then - better alter your default page and opt for restructuring your behaviour in a different – more adaptive mode.

7.8 Cognitive –Rehearsal -Technique RET / REBT– APPROACH

Your general goal, expectation in life is to remain 'happy', 'healthy' 'stress-free'. However this aim is often thwarted by adversary events in your life such as quarrels, failures, or loss, or insults and the like. And you are stressed you are disturbed, because something undesirable has happened in your life. As a result you are suffering from all sorts of negative emotions psychophysical reactions such as anxiety, depression, dejection, anger etc., which hamper your normal functioning. You can definitely reduce (or remove) negative psycho-physical effects of such events by employing cognitive – behaviour rehearsal methods.

These methods help us bring cognitive obstacles in our thinking to light. When these problem thoughts are recognized, we can hit upon these barriers by bringing about a change in our thought patterns in a systematic way. In this section we briefly note one of the important thought altering techniques - RET (Rational Emotive Therapy), currently is also known as REBT (Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy) proposed by Albert Ellis (1993a; Ellis & Dryden, 1987).

ABC Paradigm of RET / REBT

Fundamentally RET / REBT approach delineates a way of resorting to 'stress alleviating dialogue'. It achieves its goal, moving from ineffective to effective or irrational to rational thinking by establishing improved communication with oneself. It proposes, we can learn to rehearse saying things to ourselves that promote desirable behaviour and avert undesirable effects. We can re-educate ourselves to think and behave differently.

Albert Ellis, a designer of RET or REBT has advocated a phenomenological 'ABC'- model* to understand human behaviour. According to Ellis (1999) many of us remain unhappy and disturbed because we harbour certain irrational views ideas toward oneself and the world. Ellis takes the position that people consciously or unconsciously choose to disturb themselves; and therefore, they themselves can also choose consciously and actively to remain 'undisturb'. This paradigm suggests, *identify problem-causing or self-defeating thoughts and replace them with more realistic, and rewarding and logical and self-full filling ones.*

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* A: Activating events (e.g., quarrel, loss of dear one, insult etc.); C: Consequences (e.g., guilt, anxiety, depression, anger etc.); B: Beliefs (Three fundamental beliefs -1] I must be perfect in everything I do. I must be successful in every activity I undertake. 2] I must be loved and appreciated by every person I met. 3] All things must happen the way I want them to be.

The above discussion is a pointer at the general nature of RET. Let us consider specified example.

Commonly we are distressed, feel unhappy, dejected, or threatened in the face of 'failure'. Failure may be in an interview, attaining goal, desired relationship, aspired friendship etc. One single failure may haunt the individual sometimes throughout life and the whole life becomes a big source of perpetual stress.

Let us analyze (actvating) event – 'failure in interview'.

You failed in the interview and therefore you are depressed. The depression or frustration consequent to failure is quite normal and natural, every common mind rationalizes. Thus your regular cognitive structure or your thinking pattern toward the event - failure in interview is —

→ 'You appeared in an interview, you answered all the questions correctly except one, however, you were not selected finally by the panel, you failed in the interview As a result, you are depressed, anxious, angry etc. you do not feel like eating, in fact you are not eating properly these days, not sleeping well, you do not feel like meeting people. So this undesirable event is a cause of your depression, frustration, and unhappiness. This is a general link between events and their emotional and behavioural consequences.

Now, analyze the whole course of your thinking minutely and try to see for yourself the true cause of your depression: You will realize that failure is not a real cause of your discomfort; but something else has primed you to perceive and think about your failure in that manner. What this 'something else' is? RET approach helps you find out this something else which you need to recognize and work out. It identifies this something else as your Beliefs – Bs. It explains, your beliefs or belief systems have actively affected your cognitions thoughts, emotions, and your overt behaviours in the event of failure in the interview. It explains how the course of thinking proceeded; you felt extremely dejected not because you failed in the interview but because of the self-dialogue you got engaged in, immediately after the event but before you experienced its painful consequences. When you received the 'result of your failure', you immediately, consciously or unconsciously, indulged in 'self-talk'. You started blaming situation and yourself. It explains how the course of thinking proceeded. You (probably) had interacted with yourself this way:

I should not have failed. This should not have happened to me

Why this happens with 'me' only? Why such bad things occur in 'my life' only?

I cannot tolerate this failure. It is terrible, unbearable for me.

I failed means I am inferior no good – not up to the mark, I am worthless, useless, good for nothing.

# What other people will think of me now? They will ridicule me; they will look down upon me, how will I face them, I am unable to face them.

These or similar to these are the most typical 'self – interactions' 'self talk' you immediately got engaged.

Sensible introspection will make you aware of the fact that your restlessness and unhappiness is not caused by the event (failure in interview) but by the thoughts (based on personally held beliefs) that instantly occupied your mind. *The root cause of your distress or sabotager of your happiness is self – talk self-dialogue internal lecturing* which immediately began after the event took place. Thus your thinking your communication with yourself made the event terrible, unbearable and depressing.

RET explains, you felt extremely dejected when you failed in the interview because you strongly cultivated the notion that you must never fail in life in anything. You have been taught - you have learned to believe that you must succeed in everything you do; you must always be successful and happy; failure is a sign of inferiority, worthlessness, uselessness. It is highly disgraceful and shameful. If you want to do something do it well or leave.

Underlying this thinking is your belief system that you have held cultured and maintained since childhood. You have been taught to believe — "I must succeed in everything', 'I must not fail', 'I must be number one always', "pity shame on me" if I am not successful", 'I must be appreciated by all'.

Ellis (1993b) has identified Three Fundamental Beliefs rather irrational beliefs learned during childhood. They are unrealistic distorted cognitions and false expectations from others and self. They force us to engage in self - defeating dialogue. They usually take the forms of 'must' or 'should' statements. These core iBs – irrational beliefs are –

1] "*I* (ego) absolutely must perform well and win significant others' approval or else *I* am an *inadequate, worthless person.*"

2] "*You* (other people) *must* under all conditions and at all times be nice and fair to me or else *you* are a *rotten, horrible person!*"

3] "*Conditions* under which I live absolutely *must* be comfortable, safe, and advantageous or else the world is a rotten *place, I can't stand it,* and life is hardly worth living."

In other words, 'It is necessary to have the love or approval of virtually every significant other person for everything we do. [I must be loved and appreciated by every person I meet.]. We should be thoroughly competent, adequate, and successful in all possible respects if we are to consider ourselves worthwhile. [I must be perfect in everything I do. I must be successful in every activity I undertake.]. It is horrible when things don't turn out the way we want them to. [All things must happen the way I want them to be.].

It can be logically reasoned, if your 'thoughts' is the real cause of your unhappiness distress feelings then an imperative solution will be to bring about a change in your thinking / thoughts. Can I change my thoughts? Is it possible to think in another way? The answer to this question is "yes". You can definitely alter our thoughts. You can reframe your self – dialogue in different manner. You can reorganize it in special manner. Naturally curious mind questions, how to do it. RET gives active, direct, and forceful technique of (D) 'disputing beliefs' (Ellis, 1995).

It asks, Reconstruct your communication, it advises to put counter argument and revise the dialogue. By so doing you can definitely remove or at least reduce negative (psycho-physiological) impact of such events. You can establish more positive communication that may make your intense disturbing feelings less intense less disturbing. Just as there are irrational beliefs (iBs), so are there rational beliefs (rBs), counters the former.

To overcome the effects of such ‘must’ kind of ‘rigid ‘ thinking it recommends to adopt more realistic view of yourself and your circumstances. Restructure each statement into a more realistic, rational, and logical way. Argue your beliefs challenge your beliefs. Dispute your thoughts. Let your thinking be more meaningful and rewarding, self-fulfilling.

Criteria for counter-argument

Question your thoughts/thinking/behaviour

1. **Rationality** → Is this rational?
2. **Reality** → Is this realistic?
3. **Meaningfulness** → Is this meaningful?

Golden Rule

Be more Realistic

Be more Rational

Let your behaviour be more Meaningful & Rewarding

Let us apply these criteria to the self-talk about the event ‘failure in interview’.

Let us revise the earlier self – dialogue.

Let us scrutinize or examine each statement separately.

# This should not have happened to me I should not have failed.

— Why should it not have happened to me why should I have not failed; reason out if there is any law against it. This could have happened to anyone; perhaps this time 'this anyone' is, 'me'.

Is it really true, for feeling better you need success? Is there a rule, 'I should never fail'? – failure and success are two sides of the coin – life. (So 'this should not have happened to me' is not rationally correct.) The event has already occurred, this – failure is a reality, to live in unrealistic world is not right, so this statement does not stand against reality, also it is meaningless to lament on a thing, which has already taken place. I can not reverse the process. It is meaningless to cry over spilt milk.)

# Why this happens with 'me only'?

— Rethink - Has this happened to me only? No, not really, there were hundred candidates who appeared for interview only two got selected, this means I am not the only member who failed, rather I am one out of ninety eight; in fact, I am one of the majority. This has happened with ninety-eight people. (Thus on the criteria of reality, rationality and meaningfulness this statement also does not stand.)

# This (failure) is unbearable I can not tolerate this.

— Is this really a true statement that, 'I can not tolerate this'. Realistically speaking I am already tolerating this for the past fifteen days. It seems I have the capacity to endure such shocks. (So this statement is also not in real sense reality based.)

# **I failed means I am inferior I am worthless.**

— Am I really useless worthless because I failed in this interview? Does my (this single) failure prove that I am useless? Perhaps I am over generalizing. Actually if I glanced at my previous life, I am successful in many endeavours; I see many situations in which I have achieved my goals productively. There are many things, which I can do better than many others. Failure in 'one' cannot establish my worthlessness as a whole. I am good at many other things. Perhaps, this was just not for me. It would have been great if I had succeeded but everyone cannot be successful in all every time. Its better I concentrate more on the task at hand and prepare well for the next.

# **What will other people think of me? They will ridicule me, look down at me.**

Give a serious thought and you will realise people may not, rather, do not say much; majority people have gone through similar kind of experience sometimes in their life- they sail in the same boat. Even if they criticize they may soon forget. What others say or feel does not determine my worth, or that does not reduce or increase my worth, 'I am what I am'. I have my stable independent value of my own irrespective of what others say about me. (So reality is different, there is no point in wasting time over speculating 'what will happen'. Is there any sense to bother about the thing which has not yet occurred, I am not a fortune teller, it is actually meaningless, away from reality, not logical to think this way.)

You can frame reconstruct such dialogues practically for any - all-adverse situations events. The best policy would be –

— Acknowledge and accept gracefully the reality; and you will find you have reduced your frustration disgust to a great extent. If you could make practice to think rather re-think in this manner, you may / can successfully gain control over negative effects of these (such) 'so-called negative events' of your life. However, all the same, you have to re-condition your thought process because this kind of self-defeating thought system you have learned and maintained since childhood. You require good practice to unlearn the old one and re-learn a new method of processing your thinking.

'Accept yourself as fallible, imperfect (but moving in the direction of perfection) human being.'

ABCD E of Stress Management

A → *Activating Event*
(e.g., failure, loss of near one.)

B → *Beliefs* (Self –Talk)
(e.g., I must be successful in everything, this should not have happened)

C → *Consequence*
(e.g., Depression, Dissatisfaction, Unhappiness etc.)

D → *Dispute* : Re construct -dialogue
(e.g., I love success but of course I can accept failure, let me learn from my failure)

E → Positive change in 'Experience' mental state.
(Less intensely disturbed)

'Recognize, we are upset not by events but by the view we take to look at them. There is nothing absolutely 'good' or 'bad' but our thinking makes it so. Fight that enemy within us, dispute and grow. You can formulate rational dialogue like this for various situations and events.'

'Besides, think, what can I learn from this experience, what this event is telling me, listen to it and grow and March forward. If This event is asking me to put in more efforts better prepare myself well next time to meet unliked event, if this is telling me to change a course of life better go for a different kind of venture. Perhaps I am a person who has capacity to withstand, the whole episode has enhanced my basic capacities.

Growth entails multiplicity of experiences pleasant and unpleasant both. Unless you experience unpleasantness you will not know what it is. Unless you go through all types of experiences you will not become versatile. To gain something you have to loose something. To enrich your phenomenal world, experience of unpleasantness has come your way. You have now a chance to know 'unpleasantness'; you have an opportunity to study it scientifically thoroughly. Try if you can happily analyze unpleasantness, uncomfortable ness.'

A mature person usually is resplendent with all kinds of experiences. If you go through biographies and or autobiographies of noteworthy people in various fields you may find, ratio of successes and failures is tilted more towards the latter.

To mature your personality, you need to expand in all dimensions. Only then you grow fully in all sense.

Welcome life full of all colours, experience it, feel it in full way and develop.

Educate your reasoning, emotions, behaviour, and grow.

7.9 Some General Tips

Tip : Instead of relying on one technique or method it is always desirable to use more than one method or technique alternatively or simultaneously.

Tip : Learn to be able to act / work / live in stress or face stress without being stressed. Discriminate between 'shreyas' (appropriate necessary -good for the growth of personality, not necessarily pleasant) and 'preyas'. (The pleasant may be desirable wanted but may be detrimental for growth. Always go for Shreyas, in the long run that only pays.).

Tip : "Let your life, be dominated by 'reason' and not by impulses. Do not get afraid of reason; make a habit to listen to reason. Reason can be developed by using it like the muscles, will etc" (The Mother, 2004).

Tip : Before 'Doing' anything, always learn, how to do it however non-significant small trivial it may seem.

Tip : Just as we overtly behave like a cultured person so we need to behave covertly at mental level too like a pure person. Bridge the gap between 'what you are within and what you express outwardly'. Be careful and cautious about your thought/s; discipline your thoughts; grow in your mental life by exercising conscious control over your thoughts. Clean the inner life with all sincerity.

Tip : Winning a small victory in your character in all sincerity is a gain for you as well as for the world; opens a door to the greater one (The Mother, 2004).

Tip : Nurture a desire of a higher kind - the desire to know, the desire to learn, the desire to become a remarkable person.

Tip : Aspire for higher emotions and values such as love, beauty, strength, harmony, and perfection.

Tip : Be ready to accept, 'other person can think in a different way', listen to it and respect though you may not agree with it. 'Individual differences' is a reality of the world.

Tip : Revere individual differences. Try to control your reactive responses by adopting patience sublimated rationalization; adopt self questioning, and counter - reasoning or simply assuming Sakshi Bhav – calmly watching diversity of behaviours of the universe.

Tip : Do not get perturbed by failure, or by success; Successes and Failures are devices on the way to goal of life.

Tip : Before doing or reacting – behaviourally, verbally, or emotionally 'step back (for a while), think, and then move ahead.

Tip : Even after adopting certain techniques at your level, if you still stumble on things and your emotional states are not in your control, consult behavioural expert - a Psychologist or a Psychiatrist. There need be no hitch in consulting these experts as they are not only 'therapists' who treat mere abnormal behaviour or mental illnesses but they are specialists in behaviour as they have studied 'behaviour', human functioning scientifically as a 'subject' just like any other subject expert – an anatomist who has studied anatomy or a pharmacist who has studied pharmacy.

❖ ❖ ❖

Appendix

IDMI

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Instructions

How many times you make use of the following in your life in various situations that cause direct or indirect tension in you. Indicate your answer by putting a tick mark like this (✓) in an appropriate column. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer. This is just to know how frequently you use any one or more of them to maintain your poise.

Sr. No.	Reactions ↓	LAST ONE YEAR					PAST LIFE				
		Never	Rarely	Some times	Many times	Often	Never	Rarely	Some times	Many times	Often
1.	Crying										
2.	Humour/cutting jokes										
3.	Laughing at										
4.	Talking freely with friends										
5.	Taking Help/ Support of Others										
6.	Handshake/ Embracing intensely										
7.	Introspection ('what is it that really upsets me?' I put this question to myself.)										
8.	Dreaming										

Name :

Age :

Gender :

Date :

Time :

Occupation :

Education :

Thank you

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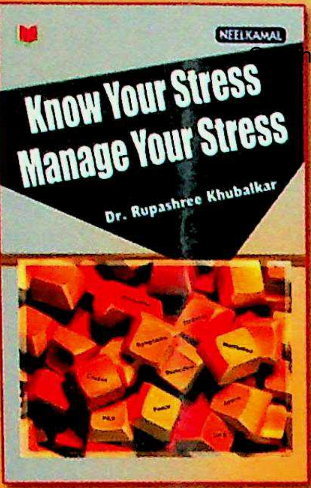

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About the Book

This book explores answers key questions pertaining to 'stress' like: why stress in my life? What does it mean to me? Why do some suffer more (or less) stress? Why and how does stress affect my health and well being? How do I know I am stressed? How do I control or direct my stress? It suggests ways to reduce and direct undesirable impact of stress when you are actually in a stress situation; it then suggests practical strategies to help you resist stress and or remain stress-free and grow within and without. It depicts certain strategies that might help you sharpen your stress–immune response leading to overall increase in physical and psychological resistance.

The author employs active, simple, self-exploratory and interactive style that a common man or woman can easily associated with. This book presents a range of feasible techniques such as 'shavasan'; short-duration, long-duration relaxation methods; meditation strategies and so on. This book cognizes the significance of ways and attitude to look at some simple routine behaviours like waking, eating, and sleeping as means to manage stress. The common men and women as well as counselors and therapists working in the field may find it a practical guide to stress management.

About the Author

Rupashree Khubalkar received Ph.D. in Psychology from Nagpur University. She obtained M.A. in Psychology, specializing in Industrial Psychology and Guidance & Counselling from Nagpur University; later she did additional specialization in Clinical Psychology from the same University. She has been awarded Advanced Diploma in Psychological Counselling by IHCA (Institute of Health Care Administration), Chennai, India. She is currently a Reader and Head of the Postgraduate Department of Psychology, Rashtrasant Tukdoji Maharaj Nagpur University, Nagpur
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